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SAINT BONAVENTURE COLLECTION

Saint Bonaventure, born Giovanni di Fidanza, was an Italian medieval Franciscan, scholastic theologian and philosopher. The seventh Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, he was also a Cardinal Bishop of Albano. He was canonised on 14 April 1482 by Pope Sixtus IV and declared a Doctor of the Church in the year 1588 by Pope Sixtus V. He is known as the "Seraphic Doctor". Many writings believed in the Middle Ages to be his are now collected under the name Pseudo-Bonaventura. He entered the Franciscan Order in 1243 and studied at the University of Paris, possibly under Alexander of Hales, and certainly under Alexander's successor, John of Rochelle. In 1253 he held the Franciscan chair at Paris. Unfortunately for Bonaventure, a dispute between seculars and mendicants delayed his reception as Master until 1257, where his degree was taken in company with Thomas Aquinas. Three years earlier his fame had earned him the position of lecturer on the *The Four Books of Sentences*—a book of theology written by Peter Lombard in the twelfth century—and in 1255 he received the degree of master, the medieval equivalent of doctor.

HOLINESS OF LIFE

SAINT BONAVENTURE

AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK.

TRANSLATED BY LAURENCE COSTELLO O.F.M.

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SAINT BONAVENTURE'S HOLINESS OF LIFE (DE PERFECTIOE VITÆ AD SORORES.)

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PREFACE

“Blessed is the man whom Thou shalt instruct, O Lord, and shalt teach out of Thy Law” (Ps. xciii, 12.) I hold that only the man taught by the Holy Spirit and imbued with His blessed unction is to be considered wise. The Prophet David lays down the same principle; he alone is really happy and wise whose mind the Lord has made learned in the Law. “The Law of God,” David notes elsewhere (Ps. xviii, 8), is the only law “without fault” and irreproachable. It alone has the secret of “converting souls” to the way of salvation. To read the Law does not suffice. We only discover its wealth of meaning and reap the fruits of its profound learning through devout and affectionate meditation.

Conscientiously, “in Spirit and in truth” (1 Thess. i, 5.), are we to seek this meaning. We must beg the Holy Spirit, with ardent longing, to give us these fruits. The Holy Ghost alone knows how to bring to light the sweetness hidden away under the rugged exterior of the words of the Law. We must go to the Holy Ghost for interior guidance.

The Law of the Lord teaches us the way to live, what is to be done, avoided, believed, prayed for, longed for and feared. It teaches how to live the blameless and spotless life, how to keep one’s promises, and how to be sincerely contrite for one’s failings. The Law of the Lord teaches contempt for earthly things and a loathing for all things of the flesh. Finally, it explains how with our whole heart, whole soul, and whole mind we are to be converted to Jesus Christ (Matt, xxii, 37.)

Compared with the doctrine of God’s Law, worldly wisdom is vain and foolish. “As long as a man does not fear or love God, no matter how great his reputation for wisdom may be,” says St. Bernard, “I shall never consider him wise” (S. Bern. Serm. 73 de Diversis.) I would remind you that many forget what they hear, but these are not numbered among the wise. The truly wise man acts, and does zealously what the Law prescribes. The doer is the

wise and the happy man. "Blessed is the man whom Thou shalt instruct, O Lord, and shalt teach him out of Thy Law."

You asked me, Reverend Mother dear to me and devoted to God, to outline from the poor treasures of my heart some little thing that for the time being would be a help to devotion and would bring some light to your soul. Really, it is I who need such help, particularly as my life is not a shining example to others. Inwardly, I am not burning with tender devotion. Further, I have scarcely the knowledge necessary to do what you ask. Nevertheless, out of regard for your repeatedly expressed wishes, and anxious to oblige you, I have done what you so earnestly prayed of me.

Let me, however, beg of Your Beatitude, dear most holy Mother, not to think so much of what I have written, as of my good and kind intentions. Please look for the truths of which I speak rather than for beauty of expression. Where I do not come up to your expectations, pardon me, and put my shortcomings down, please, to lack of time and stress of business.

CHAPTER I

TRUE SELF-KNOWLEDGE

The spouse of Christ who longs to become perfect must begin with her own self. She must put aside and forget everything else, entering into the secrecy of her own heart. When she has done this, let her sift thoroughly all her weaknesses, habits, affections, actions and sins. She must weigh everything carefully, and make a complete examination of past and present. Should she discover even the least imperfection, let her weep in the bitterness of her heart.

Negligence, passion, and malice are the three root causes of sin (Cf. Bonaventure's Threefold Way.) When we realize, dear Mother, that our sins and imperfections originate from one or other of these three causes, we enter on the way to an exact understanding of ourselves; but unless in our recollection of past offences we put our finger on the precise cause of each sin, we shall never reach the goal of perfect self-knowledge.

Perfect self-knowledge, I feel sure, is the object you propose to yourself. You wish, helped by such knowledge, to bewail your past transgressions. Since this is so you cannot do better than to proceed as follows.

First, discover by reflection whether you are occasionally or habitually negligent. Recollect whether the control of your heart is slipshod and haphazard. Are you careless in the use of your time? Is the intention you propose to your self habitually imperfect? Examine yourself diligently on these three points, because it is of the utmost importance that you govern your affections, that you spend your time profitably and that always and in every action you have a good and becoming object or end in view.

Recollect how negligent you have been in the discharge of your duties: prayer, reading, and the like. Remember that the performance of these tasks and the cultivation of these practices demand your best energies if you are

to produce and bring forth worthy fruit in due season. (Cf. Ps. i, 3.) It is of little avail to excel in one practice if you fail in the others.

Go on with the examination, recalling to mind your neglect of penitential exercises, your negligent attitude towards temptation and sin, as well as your general disregard for the means of perfection. To reach the Promised Land you must weep with grief at the thought of the sins you have committed. Further, you must resist temptations to evil, and you must “advance from virtue to virtue.” (Ps. lxxxiii, 8.) Take to heart these principles, and you will be able to form a true estimate of your negligence.

Should you wish to pursue the subject and know yourself still better, take another look at yourself and ask whether your interior promptings tend towards pleasure, curiosity or vanity.

There is an evident weakness for pleasures of sense when a religious looks eagerly for what is sweet, for instance, delicious dishes. A similar weakness prevails when she is anxious for what is soft and comforting: fine clothing, for example, or things gratifying to or soothing to the flesh, as, for example, luxuries. You may know for a certainty that the handmaid of the Lord is a victim of inquisitiveness when she longs to fathom secrets, to gaze on pleasurable and beautiful objects, and to possess unusual and precious things. To seek the esteem and the good opinion of others, to look for the praise of men and to be anxious for the honors in their gifts: the presence of any or all of these tendencies in a spouse of Christ shows a vain mind. O handmaid of Christ, shun these proclivities as poison, for they are the springs or founts of evil!

You will complete the examination and understand yourself thoroughly if you discover whether you nourish or have nourished within your breast the malice of anger, envy, or sloth. Please pay attention to what I have to say.

Anger or irascibility is surely nourished in the heart when the thoughts, whisperings, spoken words, emotions, gestures or features of a religious are tinged with even the slightest coloring of animosity or indignation against another. Envy holds sway in a man when he feels joyful at another's misfortune or is sad when better things come his neighbor's way. The envious man rejoices at another's troubles and is cast down when all goes well with him. Sloth cannot be mistaken. It is sloth that inclines the religious to lukewarmness, drowsiness, unpunctuality, laziness, negligence, remissness, dissoluteness, lack of devotion, sadness, or weariness. The

spouse of God must have a holy horror of these things and avoid them as deadly poison. In them lurks the ruin of both soul and body.

O handmaid, beloved of God, if perfect self-knowledge is your aim, reflect! "Enter into your heart and learn to value yourself at your proper worth. Discuss with yourself what you are, what you were, what you ought to be, and what you can be. Note what you were originally, what you are now through your own fault, what on the contrary good efforts ought to have made you, and what you still may be by correspondence with grace." (St. Bernard, *The Inter. Dwelling* xxxvi)

Listen, dear Mother, to the Prophet David proposing himself as an example to you. "I meditated in the night with my own heart and I was exercised and I swept my spirit" (Ps. lxxvi, 7.) He meditated with his heart; do the same yourself. He swept his spirit; sweep yours. Cultivate this field. Fix your eyes upon your own self.

Without doubt, if you keep up this exercise you will find the hidden treasure of priceless worth. (Cf. St. Matt, xiii, 44) A golden increase will come to you. More and more will your knowledge be widened and your wisdom strengthened. Be faithful to this exercise and the eye of your heart will be cleansed, the acumen of your mind developed, and your intelligence enlarged. If you do not know your own dignity and condition, you cannot value anything at its proper worth. One must first take thought upon one's own soul if the angelic and divine natures are to be correctly estimated and esteemed. If you are not able to reflect upon yourself, how will you be fitted to investigate the things above you? "If you are not yet worthy to enter the first tabernacle, how will you have the effrontery to enter the Holy of Holies?" (Richard of St. Victor)

If you wish to be lifted up to the second and third heavens (Cf. II Cor. xii, 2), you must pass through the first; that is, you must pass through your own heart. How this is possible, and how it ought to be done, I have already explained. In addition, here is a piece of excellent and illuminating advice from St. Bernard: "If you are earnestly desirous of uprightness and perfection, examine continually and think well on your way of living. Notice how much you advance in virtue and how much you fall away. Examine your conduct and the sentiments that inspire you. Look and see how like to God you are, and how unlike! How near to God, and alas, how far away from Him!" (S. Bernard, *Meditations*, Ch. v, 14)

Oh, how dangerous a thing it is for a religious to wish to know much and yet not to know himself! How near death and perdition is that religious who is keenly interested in getting to the bottom of things, or who as a spiritual guide lives to solve the doubts and perplexities of distressed souls, yet does not know himself nor his own state! (Cf. S. Bonav, Soliloquium, i, 2.) O my God, whence comes such blindness in a religious?

I will tell you. I have the reason at my finger-tips. A man whose mind is distraught in its anxieties for others has no memory for himself. His imagination is so clouded with pictures of other persons and things that he cannot form an idea of his own state. The allurements of unlawful passions so fascinate him that he never gets back to himself with a longing for interior sweetness and spiritual joy. Things of sense so possess his whole being that he can no longer enter into himself as the image of God. Thus entirely wretched, not knowing himself, he knows nothing (Cf. S. Aug., de Ordine I, 3.)

Put everything else aside and learn well and bear in mind what you are. For such self-knowledge St. Bernard prayed: "God, grant that I may know nothing if I do not know my own self." (S. Bernard, Serm. de Diversis, I)

CHAPTER II

TRUE HUMILITY

To see personal defects aright a man must feel himself “humbled under the mighty hand of God.” (I Pet. v, 6.) I admonish you, therefore, O handmaid of Christ, the moment you realise your failings, to humble yourself in abject humility and acknowledge to yourself your utter worthlessness. “Humility,” says St. Bernard, “is a virtue which prompts a man possessing an exact knowledge of himself to estimate himself and his powers as dross” (S. Bern., Degrees of Humility, i,2.)

Our holy Father St. Francis possessed this virtue. He considered himself the meanest of men, and from his entrance into religion even unto the end, he loved and cherished humility. Humility compelled St. Francis to leave the world. Humility drove him in beggar’s garb through the streets of Assisi. Because he was humble, he served the lepers. For the same reason, when preaching he made public his sins. His humility caused him to ask others to upbraid him for his faults (S. Bonav , Life of St. Francis, Ch. ii.)

You ought to learn this virtue, dear Mother, from the example of the Son of God. “Learn from me,” Jesus says, “because I am meek and humble of heart.” (Matt, xi, 29.) To excel in virtue and yet not to practise humility is simply to “carry dust before the wind,” says St. Gregory (S. Greg., I Homil. on the Gospel, vii, 4.) As “pride is the beginning of all sin,” (Eccl. x, 15) so humility is the foundation of all virtue. Learn to be really humble and not, as the hypocrite, humble merely in appearance.

Speaking of hypocrites Ecclesiasticus says, “There is one that humbleth himself wickedly and his interior is full of deceit” (Eccl. xix, 23.) “The truly humble man,” says St. Bernard, “does not desire to be advertised as a humble man, but wishes to be reputed and considered worthless” (S. Bernard, Sermons on the Canticle, xvi, 10.)

So, Reverend Mother, if you wish to be perfectly humble, you must advance by three stages.

The first stage is thought upon God as the Author of all good. We must say to ourselves, “O Lord, Thou hast wrought all our works in us”(Is. xxvi, 12.) Because this is really so, you must attribute every good work to Him and not to yourself. Bear in mind that “you in your own might and in the strength of your own hand” (Cf. Deut. viii, 17) have not attained to all the good things you possess. “It is the Lord who made us and not we ourselves” (Cf. Ps. xcix, 3.)

Such thoughts completely upset the pride of those who say, “Our mighty hand and not the Lord hath done all these things” (Deut. xxxii, 27.) It was pride such as this which caused Lucifer to be expelled from the glory of heaven. Lucifer would not realise that he was made from nothing, but taking delight in his comeliness and beauty, and remarking how “every precious stone was his covering,” (Cf. Ezek. xxviii, 13) he exalted himself in his pride. And because “pride goes before a fall,” (Cf. Prov. xxix, 23) in the twinkling of an eye he was hurled headlong from his pride of place down to the lowest depths of abject misery. Thus the most exalted of angels became the most depraved of demons.

Oh, how many children of Lucifer there are today, men and women, imitators of Lucifer! Sons and daughters of pride whom God in His patience endures! “Pride,” says St. Bernard, “is less hateful in the rich than in the poor” (S. Bernard, Sermon liv, 8.) The handmaid of Christ, therefore, must always practise humility, since she is to fill the place vacated by a rejected angel. It matters little whether the creature is an angel or a man; humility alone renders both the one and the other pleasing to God.

If you are not humble, do not imagine for a moment that your virginity is pleasing to God. Mary would not have been made the Mother of God if she had been a proud woman. “I make bold to say,” writes St. Bernard, “that without humility not even Mary’s virginity would have pleased God” (S. Bernard, Hom. I in S. Luke, i, 26.) Humility is a great virtue. Without it not only is there no virtue, but that which might have been virtue is vitiated and turns to pride.

The second stage is the remembrance of Christ. You must remember that Christ was humiliated even to a most ignominious death (Cf. Phil, ii, 8.) So humiliated was He that He was reputed a leper. Hence Isaiah said, “We

have thought Him as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God” (Is. liii, 4.) Christ was humiliated to such an extent that in His day nothing was considered viler than He. “In humiliation,” continues the prophet, “His judgment was taken away” (Is. liii, 8.) The burden of the prophet’s thought is this: So great was His humility, and so lowly did He make Himself that no one could form a correct judgment of Him, no one could believe that He was God.

If then “Our Lord and Master” Himself said: “The servant is not greater than his Lord, the disciple is not above his master” (John xiii, 16; Matt, x, 24), so you, if you are the handmaid of Christ and His disciple, must be lowly, prepared to be despised and humbled. What is more contemptible in God’s eyes than the religious who with a humble garment covers a proud heart? Of what use is that Christian who sees His Lord humbled and despised, yet himself “exalts his heart and walks in great matters and in wonderful things above himself” (Cf. Ps. cxxx, i)?

The Most High God became as the least of all, and the immense Creator became a little creature; yet a filthy worm, a mere handmaid of Christ, “exalts and magnifies herself” (Cf. Ps. ix, 18.) What could be more detestable! What could be more deserving of punishment! Of such the blessed St. Augustine exclaims in this way: “O ye bags of carrion, why do you swell yourselves up so? O ye putrid festers, why are you puffed up? How dare the members of a body be proud when the Head is humble?” (S. Aug., Sermon. 304.) A forceful way of emphasizing the unseemliness of such behaviour!

The third stage by which you must advance, if you would become really humble, is by close acquaintanceship with your own self. You become acquainted with yourself when you realise “whence you have come and whither you are going” (S. Bern., Meditations i, I.) Consider then whence you come, and take it to heart that you are the slime of the earth. You have wallowed in sin and are an exile from the happy kingdom of Heaven. Thoughts such as these will quell the spirit of pride and drive it away somewhat. Thoughts like these will persuade you to cry out with the three youths mentioned in the book of Daniel, “We are brought low in all the earth, this day for our sins” (Dan. iii, 37.)

Take now the other point. Where are you going? You are slowly moving towards corruption and elemental ashes. “Dust thou art and unto dust shalt

thou return” (Gen. iii, 19.) “Why be proud, you who are but dust and ashes?” (Cf. Ecclesiasticus x, 9.) Today here, tomorrow gone! In good health today, a mass of ailments tomorrow! Wise today, possibly an idiot tomorrow! Rich—and rich in virtue as you read these lines—tomorrow it may easily be said that you could find yourself a miserable, wretched beggar! Show me the Christian who will dare to extol himself when he realizes that he is hemmed in on all sides by so many miseries and possible misfortunes!

Learn, consecrated virgins, to have a humble mind and to walk with a humble mien. Be humble in your tastes and ways and dress. It is humility, remember, that softens God’s anger and renders us fit subjects for His holy grace. The greater thou art,” remarks Ecclesiasticus, “the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God” (Ecclesiasticus iii, 20.) This is how Mary found favour with God. Her own words are: “He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid” (Luke i, 48.)

There is no reason for surprise in this. Humility prepares the way for God’s grace and frees the mind from all vanity. It is for this reason that St. Augustine says, “The less the pride, the more the love” (S. Aug., De Civit. Dei, VIII. 12.) Just as the waters crowd into the valleys, so the graces of the Holy Spirit fill the humble. And to continue the comparison, just as the greater the incline the quicker the water flows, so the more the heart bends under humility, the nearer we are to God. Thus it is easy for the man who is humble of heart to approach near to God and to beg His Grace. “The prayer of him that humbleth himself,” Ecclesiasticus tells us, “shall pierce the clouds: and till it come nigh [to the Most High] he will not be comforted” (Ecclesiasticus xxxv, 21.) For “the Lord will do the will of them that fear Him, and He will hear their prayers” (Ps. cxliv, 19.)

Dear children of God and handmaids of Christ, be always humble. “Never allow pride to dominate your hearts” (Cf. Tob. iv, 14.) You have in Jesus Christ Our Lord a humble Master. Your mistress, Our Blessed Lady and Queen of us all, was humble. Be humble because St. Francis your Father was humble. Be humble because your Mother, St. Clare, was a model of humility.

Be humble almost to excess, and let patience be the test of your humility, for humility is perfected by patience. Indeed there is no humility without patience. Listen to the words of St. Augustine: “It is easy to place a veil

over the head and to cover the eyes, to wear poor and wretched clothes, and to walk with the head cast down, but it is patience that proves a man to be really humble” (S. Aug., Epist., 17.) “In thy humiliation,” says Ecclesiasticus, “keep patience” (Ecclesiasticus ii, 4.)

Alas—and I speak with sorrow—there are many of us who would lead proud lives in the cloister, yet we were lowly enough in the world. St. Bernard realised this and voiced his complaint: “It grieves me very much to see many who trod beneath their feet the pomps of the world come into the school of humility the better to learn the ways of pride. Under the aegis of a mild and humble master they wax arrogant, and they become more impatient in the cloister than they were in the world. What is still worse, very many will not suffer themselves to be held of little worth in the house of God, although in their own circle they could not have been anything but lowly, nay, even contemptible” (S. Bern. Homil. iv, 10.)

I recommend you, therefore, dear Mother, to be solicitous for your daughters. Teach your daughters who have consecrated themselves to God to guard their virginity by humility, and to keep themselves humble by the practice of their virginity. “Virginity associated with humility is like a precious stone in a gold setting,” says St. Bernard. “What is there so beautiful as the union of virginity with humility? How indescribably pleasing to God is the soul in which humility enhances virginity and virginity embellishes humility.” (S. Bern. Homil. Missus est, i, 5.)

Lastly, dear Mother, please take the following advice from me, your brother. It will please you. Avoid a proud sister as you would avoid a viper; keep clear of the arrogant nun as though she were a devil. Look upon the companionship of the proud as some thing that is a virulent poison. Why? I will tell you why. A rather clever writer has left us the following pen picture of a proud man. “The proud man is unbearable. He is too loud in dress, pompous in his bearing, stiff-necked, unnaturally harsh of countenance, stern-eyed, ever on the lookout for the first places, wishful to outstrip his betters, boastful in everything, and devoid of all ideas of respect and proper reverence” (Prosper, Contemp. Life, viii, I.)

“He that hath fellowship with the proud,” says Ecclesiasticus, “shall put on pride.” (Cf Ecclesiasticus xiii, I.) O dear child of God, spouse of Christ, and virgin consecrated to the Lord, if you would avoid the risk of falling into the ways of the proud, shun the companionship of the proud.

CHAPTER III

PERFECT POVERTY

Poverty is another of the virtues necessary if we would be holy unto perfection. Our Lord bears witness to this in the Gospel of St. Matthew: “If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor” (Matt, xix, 21.) Since the fullness of Gospel perfection is found in poverty, no one should imagine that he has scaled the summits of perfection if he has not become an adept in the practice of evangelical poverty. Hugh of St. Victor tells us that “no matter how many practices of perfection are found among religious, unless there is a love for poverty their life cannot be considered fully perfect” (Cf. Expos. Reg. S. Aug., i Sq.)

Two motives may be suggested that are capable of impelling not merely a religious, but even an ordinary man to a love of poverty. The first is the irreproachable example of Our Divine Lord. The second is the priceless divine promise.

Let us take the first motive. The love and the example of Our Divine Lord, Jesus Christ, ought to excite in you, His handmaid, a love of poverty. Christ was born poor, lived poor, and died poor. Realise and bear in mind that Christ gave you this wonderful example of poverty in order to induce you to become a friend of poverty. Our Lord Jesus Christ was so poor at birth that He had neither shelter, nor clothing, nor food. In lieu of a house He had to be content with a stable. A few wretched rags did duty for His clothes. For food He had milk from the Virgin’s breast.

It was meditation on this poverty of Christ that roused the heart of St. Paul and caused him to exclaim, “You know the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich He became poor for our sakes, that through His poverty we might be rich” (Cf. II Cor. viii, 9.) St. Bernard speaking of this same poverty says, “An eternal and copious abundance of riches existed in

Heaven. Poverty, however, was not to be found there, though it abounded and was superabundant on earth. Alas! man did not know its worth. The Son of God, though, loved poverty, and desired it, and came down from Heaven and took it as his own possession in order to make it precious in our eyes” (S. Bern. Serm. for Christmas Eve I, 5.)

All His life long, Jesus Christ Our Lord was an example of poverty. Let me tell you, O holy virgin, and all you who profess poverty, let me tell you how poor the Son of God and King of Angels was while He lived in this world. He was so poor that oftentimes He did not know which way to turn for lodging. Frequently, He and His Apostles were compelled to wander out of the city and sleep where they could. It is with reference to such a happening that St. Mark the Evangelist writes, “Having viewed all things round about, when now the eventide was come, He went out to Bethany with the twelve” (Mark xi, 11.)

These words St. Bede explains as follows: “After looking all around and making enquiries as to whether any one was prepared to give Him hospitality—for He was so poor that no one looked upon Him with pleasure—He could not find a dwelling open to Him in the town” (Cf. S. Bede, Vol. V. p. 125.) In a similar strain St. Matthew writes: “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of Man hath nowhere to lay His head” (Matt, viii, 20; Cf. Expos. S. Bonav.)

Added to the poverty of His birth and life was the poverty of the death of the King of Angels. “All you” who have taken the vow of poverty, “stop and consider for a moment” (Lamentations, i, 12) how poor the Lord of all was made for your sakes. Look at His poverty as He dies. His executioners stripped and robbed Him of everything He possessed. He was robbed of His clothes, I repeat it, when the executioners “divided His garments between them, and for His vesture cast lots.” (Cf. Matt, xxvii, 35; Cf. Ps. xxi, 19.) He was robbed of body and soul when, as He succumbed to His most bitter sufferings, His soul was separated from His body in the pangs of death. His persecutors deprived and robbed Him of His divine glory when they refused “to glorify Him as God,” (Cf. Rom. i, 21) and instead treated Him as a common criminal.

“They have stripped me of my glory,” (Cf. Job xix, 9) complains holy Job in a moment of prophecy. Drawing a lesson from the compelling example of Christ’s poverty, St. Bernard writes: “Think of the poor man Christ!

There is no house for Him at His birth, so they lay Him in a manger, between an ox and an ass. Look at Him wrapped in wretched swaddling clothes! Think of Him a fugitive on the rough road to Egypt! Think of Him riding on an ass! Think of His poverty as He hangs on the cross” (S. Bern. Sermon. Easter III, I.)

After realizing that the God of Gods, the Lord of the World, the King of Heaven, the only begotten Son of God has borne the burden of such dire poverty, where is the Christian, where is the obstinate and benighted religious who still loves riches and despises poverty? “It is a great, a heinous crime that a vile and contemptible worm, for whom the God of Majesty and Lord of All became poor, should desire to be rich.” So says St. Bernard, and he adds: “Let the godless pagan covet riches. Let the Jew who has received the promise of the land look for the fulfilment of the promise and for the possession of the land” (S. Bern. Sermon. All Saints I. 7.)

But the maiden consecrated to God, the maiden who lives among Christ’s poor and whose profession is poverty, how can she look for the riches of earth? How, pray, can a daughter of the poor man of Assisi, a maiden who has promised to imitate the poverty of her holy Mother St. Clare, search for earthly riches?

Beyond all measure of belief, dear Mother, are we in our avarice put to shame. Although professing poverty, we have bartered away poverty for avarice. Although the Son of God “became poor for our sakes,” (1 Cor. viii, 9) we are solicitous for what is not allowed us. We try to obtain what the Rule strictly forbids.

In commending perfect Gospel poverty to you, let me insist on the following well-known fact: The more you are attached to the poverty you profess, and the more you practise evangelical poverty, the more will you abound in spiritual and temporal treasures. If you go the contrary way, if you set no value on the poverty you have made your own by profession, then of a certainty will you experience most constant spiritual and temporal need.

That one-time poor woman, Mary the Mother of the poverty-stricken Jesus, sang: “He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich he hath sent empty away” (Luke i, 53.) The most holy Psalmist expressed the same thought: “The rich have wanted, and have suffered hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good” (Ps. xxx, ii.) Did you

never read, did you never hear what Christ the Lord said of poverty to His Apostles? It occurs in the Gospel of St. Matthew. “Be not solicitous, therefore, saying, what shall we eat, or, what shall we drink. Your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things” (Matt, vi, 31–32.) Here is something else He said. It is from St. Luke. “When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, did you lack anything? But they said: Nothing” (Luke xxii, 35–36.)

Living among hard-hearted unbelieving persons, Christ did not find it difficult to attend to His disciples’ wants. Is it any wonder then that He is able to supply the wants of the Friars Minor, and the Poor Ladies, who, living among a faithful and Christian people, profess and imitate a poverty akin to that of the Apostles? “Cast, therefore, all your care upon Him, for He careth for you” (1 Pet. v, 7.)

Since the fatherly care and solicitude of God for us is so intense, should not our anxious longing for temporal things cause us to marvel? Should it not astound us that we are eaten up with desire for vain and empty things? Why, when God occupies Himself with our welfare, do we trouble ourselves so about things of wealth and things of little concern? I can find no other explanation than that we have become avaricious. Avarice—avarice, the mother of confusion and damnation—has taken hold of us.

We may give no other reason than that we have turned away our affections from God, our Salvation (Cf. Deut. xxxii, 15.) The fire of Divine Love has become extinguished in us. We have cooled. Love for God has frozen within us. If we were really fervent and had really stripped ourselves of earthly things, we should follow the poverty-stricken Christ (S. Jer. Ep. cxxv, 20.) When men become excessively hot, they are accustomed to strip themselves of their clothes. The proof of our lack of love and of our great coolness is the attraction which worldly goods possess for us.

O my God, how can we be so harsh with Christ? “He went forth from His own country,” from Heaven, “from His own kinsfolk,” the Angels, “from the house of His Father,” (Cf. Gen. xii, i) from His Father’s bosom, and for us became poor, abject and despised! Yet we are unwilling to give up a wretched and noisome world for Him. We leave the world in body, it is true, but in heart and mind and inclination we give ourselves up to and are wholly absorbed by the world.

O blessed servant of God, recall the poverty of Our Lord Jesus Christ, poor for our sake! Impress on your heart the poverty of your Father, the poor little man Francis. Meditate on the poverty of your holy Mother St. Clare. Cleave to poverty and practise it zealously and courageously. Embrace the Lady Poverty and pray God that for Our Lord's sake you may never wish to love anything else under heaven save poverty. Keep your heart free from love of honours, temporal things, and riches. Strive diligently to live up to the holy poverty you have vowed.

It is a waste of energy to possess and to love riches. To have one's heart set on riches and yet to be poor is a dangerous business. To be rich and yet not to love one's riches is too wearisome. The advantage, the security, the delight of life and the act of perfect virtue is neither to possess riches nor to have any fondness for riches. Therefore, Our Lord's example and counsel ought to prompt and inspire every Christian to love poverty.

O blessed poverty, which makes those who love it beloved of God and secure even in this world! "For him who has nothing in the world on which his heart is set, there exists nothing of the world to fear" (S. Greg. Moral. Book X, xxi, 39.) So says St. Gregory. In the lives of the Fathers we read that there was a certain poor monk who owned a mat. At night he put half of it under him and the other half he used as a coverlet. Once when it was very cold, the superior of the monastery heard the poor monk praying: "I give thanks, O my God," he prayed, "because there are very many rich men in prison, many in irons, many in the stocks. But I, like an emperor and lord, may stretch my legs and go whither I wish" (Life of John the Almsg., xx.)

There now; I have done with the first point, the example of poverty. The second motive to inspire a love of poverty is the promise, the priceless promise of Christ. O good Jesus, "rich unto all," (Rom. x, 19) who can worthily realize, tell, or write of that marvellous heavenly glory which Thou hast promised to give to Thy poor? The practice of voluntary poverty earns the reward of the beatific vision (Cf. S. Greg. Hom., II Book, xxxvii, I), and the right to enter into the palace of the Power of God (Cf. Ps. lxx, 16.) Votaries of voluntary poverty merit a place in the eternal dwellings. They have a right to enter God's brilliantly illuminated mansions, and they become citizens of the city built and fashioned by God.

Thou, O my God, with Thy own Blessed Mouth hast promised them this eternal reward! “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt, v, 6.) The Kingdom of Heaven, O my Lord Jesus Christ, is nothing else than Thou, Thyself, Who art “the King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (I Tim. vi, 15.) As reward, as the price of their labour, as a complete and perfect joy, Thou wilt give to Thy voluntary poor even the possession of Thyself.

They will rejoice in possessing Thee. They will find delight in Thee. They will, at last, find complete satisfaction in Thee. For “the poor shall eat and shall be filled; and they shall praise the Lord that seek Him; their hearts shall live for ever and ever” (Ps. xxi, 27.) Amen.

CHAPTER IV

SILENCE

“In the multitude of words there shall not want sin” (Prov. x, 19.) I quote from the Book of Proverbs.

Obviously, a religious aiming to perfect his ways will find silence a very helpful virtue. To speak seldom, and then but briefly, prevents sin. Where there is too much talk, God is in one way or another offended, and reputations suffer. On the other hand, let only the virtue of silence come into its own, and people get their due. If we deal fairly with one another and practise the virtue of justice, we establish the bond of peace. This means that where silence is observed, the fruits of peace are gathered as easily as fruit is gathered from a heavily-laden tree.

Of all places in the world peace is essential in the cloister. Silence is of paramount importance in the life of a religious, because by means of silence peace of mind and body is preserved. Expounding on the virtue of silence, Isaiah the prophet said: “The work of justice shall be peace, and the service of justice shall be quietness” or silence (Is. xxxii, 17; Cf. S. Greg. Moral. VII, xvii, 58; S. Bern. Epis. lxxxix, 2.) It is as though he said: The nature of silence is such that it acts as a preservative of the godly virtue Justice. It encourages peaceful ways and enables men to live in peace and harmony.

We may lay it down as a principle that unless a man diligently “sets a guard to his tongue,” (Cf. Ps. xxxviii, 24. Ps. cxl, 3) he must lose all the graces he has acquired and necessarily and quickly fall into evil ways. “The tongue,” wrote the Apostle St. James, “is indeed a little member and boasteth great things.” It is “a fire, a world of iniquity” (James iii, 5, 6.) According to the commentators, St. James’ meaning is that almost all evil deeds are inspired or perpetrated by the tongue.

I shall now briefly enumerate for you, dear sister, the sins into which we are liable to fall if we do not keep a strict guard over the tongue. A loose and glib tongue easily becomes the vehicle of blasphemy and murmuring. The tongue that wags will be guilty of perjury, lying and detraction. The sin of flattery is easy to it. Easy as well are cursing, abusive language, quarrelsome talk, and words which mockingly slander virtue and entice to evil deeds. Scandalous gossip, vain boasting, the divulging of secrets, idle threats, rash promises, frequent and silly chattering and scurrilous conversation: all these sins come lightly, smoothly, and easily from an unguarded tongue.

To be unable to hold her tongue ought to make an ordinary woman blush. When the woman is a woman consecrated to God, a woman who knows the magnitude of the evils following on too easy a use of the tongue, then that woman's life is marred by a gross blemish. I have no hesitation in saying that it is useless for a religious to take pride in the virtue which characterizes her, if by too much talking she observes the rule of silence only in the breach. "If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (James i, 26.)

O amiable spouses of Jesus Christ, let us look up to Mary, Our Lady and Mother, since all virtues are reflected in Mary. Helped by the Holy Gospels, let us look upon her and learn how to keep silence. St. Luke records that Mary spoke seldom and with but few people. From him we learn that twice she spoke with the Angel (Luke i, 34 & 38), twice with her Divine Son (Luke ii, 48; John ii, 3), twice with her cousin St. Elisabeth (Luke i, 40 & 46 sq), and once to the waiters at the Marriage Feast (John ii, 5.) Thought on Our Lady's spare use of words will do us good. It will cause us to blush. We are too talkative. With us it is talk, talk, talk, yet all the time silence is the great and useful thing.

Silence begets compunction of heart, and here is its first useful purpose. When a man is silent he falls to thinking and brooding over his manner of life (Cf. Ps. cxviii, 59.) This enables him quickly to see his many defects and the little progress he has made in the spiritual life, and soon compunction holds him captive. David tells us this: "I was mute and humbled, and kept silence from good things, and my sorrow was renewed" (Ps. xxxviii, 3.)

Silence has another advantage: It shows that man belongs to a better world. If a man lives in Germany and yet does not speak German, we naturally conclude that he is not a German. So too, we rightly conclude that a man who does not give himself up to worldly conversation is not of this world, although he lives therein. The argument is conclusive. St. John the Evangelist, quoting St. John the Baptist, has told us: "He that is of the earth, of the earth he is, and of the earth he speaketh" (John iii, 31. Cf. S. Bern. Epis. lxxviii, 4.)

The religious who wants to cultivate the habit of silence cannot do better than to shun the company of his fellows and lead the life of a solitary. When he has lifted himself out of himself, God should be his only companion and comforter. A solitary and quiet life should be his aim. To have God as his companion should suffice, and he should look for neither comfort from nor companionship with men. "He shall sit solitary," avoiding the companionship of his fellows, "and shall hold his peace," (Lamentations, iii, 28) and meditating on heavenly things, he should lift himself above himself and revel in the sweetness of heavenly delights.

To be perfectly virtuous, a religious must practise silence. Silence is essential to the spouses of Jesus Christ and to women consecrated to God. Religious women should be particularly sparing with their words. Their words should be "precious" (Cf. I Kings iii, I.) Talking should cause them to blush, and they should never speak except in extreme necessity. St. Jerome may be quoted very aptly here: "Let the words of a virgin be few and seemly, and precious rather by their reticence than by their eloquence" (S. Jer., Epis. i, 19.)

One of the great philosophers of old taught in the same way: "To be perfect, I would counsel you to speak but little and only on rare occasions. When a rare occasion occurs, remember too, to speak scarcely above a whisper" (Seneca, Ep. xl.) O you talkative girls, you chatterboxes, you garrulous nuns! I have a story for you which, if you take it to heart, will teach you what you must do if you would learn to keep silence.

In the lives of the Fathers (Migne Patr. V, Book iv, 7), it is related that a certain abbot, Agathon by name, kept a stone in his mouth to prevent his talking. For three years he continued the practice until at last he learned how to hold his tongue. Take this lesson to heart: tie a stone to your tongue. Fasten your tongue to your palate. "Put thy fingers on thy mouth" (Judges

xviii, 19) and learn to keep silent. Remember always that it ill becomes a woman vowed to Christ to look for conversation with any one except her Spouse Jesus Christ.

Talk, therefore, only on rare occasions, and let your conversations be short. Use but few words. Speak in fear and trembling and in all modesty. Above all “scarcely ever speak in your own cause,” (Cf. Ecclesiasticus xxxii, 10), that is, in your own defence. Cover your face with a veil of bashful modesty. Sew your lips together with the threads of rule and discipline. Let your words be few, for “in the multiplicity of words there shall not want sin” (Prov. x, 19.) Let your conversation be useful, modest and humble. Never speak an idle word, because “every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment” (Matt, xii, 36.) Speaking of idle words, it may be noticed with St. Gregory that “an idle word is one that the speaker uses without necessity or with no advantage to the hearer” (S. Greg., Moral., VII, xvii, 58.)

It is always better and more useful to be silent than to speak. As witness of which truth let me quote a saying of Xenocrates, one of the philosophers of old: “I have often repented because I spoke, but never have I been sorry that I held my peace.” (Val. Max. vii Dict. Fact. Memorab., 2.)

CHAPTER V

THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

The religious whose heart is cold and tepid leads a wretched and useless life; nay, the tepid religious, the religious who does not pray fervently and assiduously, scarcely lives at all. His body lives, but in the sight of God it harbors a dead soul. It follows then that prayerful habits are essential if the spouse of Christ is to achieve her desires and advance towards perfection. The practice of prayer is a virtue of such efficacy that of itself it can completely subdue all the cunning devices of its implacable enemy, the devil. It is the devil and the devil alone who prevents the servant of God from soaring above herself even unto the heavens. There is, then, no reason for surprise that the religious who is not devoted to the practice of constant prayer succumbs frequently to temptation.

St. Isidore realised this truth, for he says: “Prayer is the remedy when temptations to sin rage in the heart. Whenever you are tempted to sin, pray, and pray earnestly. Frequent prayer renders powerless the assaults of vice” (S. Isid. III Sent, viii, I.) Our Lord gives similar advice in the Gospel: “Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation” (Matt xxvi, 41.)

Devout prayer is so powerful that it enables a man to win whatever he wants. Winter and summer, when times are stormy, when times are fair, night and day, Sunday and Monday, in days of health, in the hour of illness, in youth and old age, standing, sitting and walking, in choir and out of choir: in a word, never need the efficacy of prayer fail. Indeed, at times, more than the very world itself its worth may be gained by one hour of prayer. By one little devout prayer it is possible for a man to gain Heaven.

I shall now discuss the nature of prayer. Probably, in this matter I am more in need of information than you are! Still, insofar as the Lord inspires me, I shall tell you in what way and manner you should pray.

I would have you know, O worthy handmaid of God, that three conditions are requisite for perfect prayer. When you settle down to pray, close your senses to every sensation, and with your body and soul absolutely intent on what you are doing, ponder in silence with a sorrowful and contrite heart on all your past, present, and possible wretched efforts. Reflect seriously, in the first place, on the many grave sins you have committed from day to day. Call to mind how you have neglected so many opportunities for doing good—opportunities that came your way since your entrance into religion, and opportunities that were given you before you took the veil. Think of the many and wonderful graces you have lost (Cf. St. Bonaventure, *The Threefold Way*, II, 2.) Once you were near to God; realise how today sin keeps you far from Him. Bring home to yourself the fact that you have become unlike to God, yet there was a day when you were conformed to His very image and likeness. Your soul was once beautiful; today it is ugly and foul. Think on these facts.

Now turn your thoughts on what the future has in store for you. Whither will sin eventually “lead you”? “To the very gates of hell!” Remember that there is “a day of “dreadful “judgment.” What is likely to befall you? Do not forget “the eternal fires of hell” (S. Bern. *Medit.*) How will your sins be punished?

Your reflection should move you to strike your breast with the humble publican (Cf. Luke xviii, 13.) “Groaning in heart, you should cry out your sorrow” (Cf. Ps xxxvii, 9) with the Prophet David, and in company with Mary Magdalene you should “wash the feet” of the Lord “with your tears” (Cf. Luke vii, 38.) There should be no end to your tears, for beyond all bounds have you offended your sweet Jesus by your sins.

St. Isidore gives similar advice. “When we pray to God, we should pray with groaning and weeping. This is possible if, when at prayer, we remember the sins we have committed, their exceptional gravity, and the awful torments we have deserved to suffer on account of our sins. Fear of those dread torments will enable us to pray with genuine sorrow” (S. Isidore, *III Sent*, vii, 5.)

In this way we should begin our prayer. We should start our prayer with tears that spring from sincere regret and earnest fear.

Thanksgiving is the second requisite. Blessings received from God should call forth the humble thanks of the spouse of Christ. So too, should

she thank God in all humility for the benefits yet to accrue to her. In his epistle to the Colossians St. Paul lays stress on this part of prayer: “Be instant,” he says, “in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving” (Col. iv, 2.) Nothing makes a man so worthy of God’s gifts as the constant offering of thanks to God for gifts received.

Writing to Aurelius, St. Augustine touches on this matter. “What better thoughts,” he asks, “can we have in our minds, what better sentiments in our hearts than those of thanksgiving to God? What better words are given us to utter or to write than *Deo Gratias*? The idea of due thanksgiving could not be expressed in fewer words. What other words could give greater pleasure? No other two words are so full of meaning. What more profitable than their use?” (S. Aug. Ep. xli.)

You must meditate, you must pray with a grateful heart. Thank God because He made you. Thank Him because He raised you to the Christian state. Thank God because He has forgiven you so many sins. Thank Him because, had He not taken care of you, you would have fallen much lower (Cf. S. Bern. Serm. ii in 6 Sund. after Pent.) Thanksgiving is due from you because God has taken you out of the world; thanks to Him you will die in religion. You should thank God because He has chosen you to live the life of a religious in the highest and most perfect religious state. You have no worry, nor any anxiety. He keeps you from harm, comforts you, and gives you all that you need.

Further motives for continual thanksgiving on your part arise from the fact that God took to Himself a human nature and became man for your sake. It was for you that He was circumcised and baptized. For you He lived His poor life. For you He went poorly clothed, was humbled and despised. All His fastings, hungers, thirst, labours, and fatigues He endured for your sake. For you He wept. Love for you prompted Him to give you His Most Holy Body to eat and His Most Precious Blood to drink. In anguish for you He bled from His very pores in the Garden. For you He was struck in the face, spat upon, mocked and scourged. For love of you He was fastened to the cross. He was wounded for your sake. He was done to death by the most cruel and agonizing crucifixion because of His love for you.

It was because He so loved you that He paid such a price for your redemption. He was buried, He rose from the dead, He ascended into Heaven, and He sent the Holy Spirit into the world simply because of His

promise to give you and His chosen ones the Kingdom of Heaven. Such motives should be sufficient inducement to you to make your prayer an act of thanksgiving. Remember too, that while acts of gratitude render prayer immeasurably efficacious, all prayer is valueless without the element of thanksgiving. “Ingratitude,” says St. Bernard, “is a parching wind which dries up the sources of piety, the dew of mercy, and the streams of grace” (S. Bern. Sermon. li on the Canticle of Cant.)

This brings me to the third requisite of perfect prayer. You must in the act of prayer occupy yourself with and think of nothing else but what you are doing. It ill becomes a man to speak to God with his lips while in heart and mind he is far away from God. To pray half-heartedly—giving, say, half one’s attention to what one is doing and the remaining half to some business matter or other—is no prayer at all. Prayers made in such a way as this never reach the ear of God. In the 118th Psalm there occurs the following line: “I cried with my whole heart: hear me, O Lord” (Ps. cxviii, 145.) St. Augustine discovers in this passage the implication that “a heart divided obtains nothing” (S. Aug. on same verse, Sermon. xxix.)

When at prayer, the servant of God should recollect herself and, taking her heart to herself, banish from it all solicitude for things of earth. Earthly desires should be put aside and all love of friends and family forgotten. All her thoughts and affections should be turned inwards and she should give herself up wholly to the God to whom she prays.

Your spouse, Our Divine Lord, Jesus Christ, gave this counsel in the Holy Gospel: “But thou, when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret” (Matt, vi, 6.) “To enter into your chamber” means to recall and gather into the very inmost recesses of your heart all your thoughts, all your desires, and all your affections. You have “shut the door” when you have your heart so well under control that no thought or wandering fantasy can thwart you in your devotions.

St. Augustine’s definition of prayer makes all this evident. “Prayer,” he says, “is the raising or turning of the mind to God by means of loving and humble acts of affection” (S. Aug., *The Holy Spirit and the Soul*, 50.)

Let me exhort you, most good Mother and handmaid of Jesus Christ, to “incline your ear to the words of my mouth.” (Cf. Ps. xlv, ii; Ps. lxxvii, I.) Do not be misled. Do not be deceived in any way. Do not allow the sure and great fruits of prayer to slip from your grasp; do not throw away and so

destroy the sweets of prayer. Let not the delights you may drink to the full in prayer be drunk to no purpose. Prayer is the well out of which sanctifying grace is drawn from the spring of the overflowing sweetness of the Most Blessed Trinity.

The Holy Prophet David, who knew all about this, said, “I opened my mouth, and panted” (Ps. cxviii, 131.) “David meant,” says St. Augustine, “I opened my mouth in prayer, I begged by prayer. With reiterated prayers I knocked at the door of Heaven, and thirsting for the grace of God I panted and drew in that heavenly grace” (S. Aug. on the same Psalm.)

I have already told you what prayer is, but I will tell it to you again. “Prayer is the raising or turning of the mind to God.” Pay attention to what I am about to say if you wish to learn how to raise or turn your mind to God.

When you give yourself to prayer, you must recollect yourself and with your Beloved enter into your secret heart and there occupy yourself with Him alone. Forget everything else and with all your mind, heart, affections and desires, with all the devotion possible, lift yourself out of and above yourself (Cf. Lamentations, iii, 28.) Take care not to allow your mind to become remiss, but endeavour constantly, by the burning ardour of devotion, to mount upwards till you enter “into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God” (Ps. xli, 5.)

There, when with the eye of your soul you have caught sight of your Beloved, you should in one way and another “taste that the Lord is sweet” (Ps. xxxiii, 9), and learn how great is “the multitude of His sweetness” (Ps. xxx, 20.) You should rush to your Lover’s embrace, and kiss Him with the lips of tenderest love. Then, indeed, will you be lifted out of yourself. You will be rapt even up to Heaven. You will be transformed wholly into Christ. At last, unable to restrain the raptures of your soul, you will exclaim with David, “My soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God and I was delighted” (Ps. lxxvi, 3, 4.)

There are three ways in which the soul may be transported out of herself and elevated even unto God. In order then, dear mother, that you may learn how the heart may be lifted up higher and higher, and how prayer may inflame our love for God still more, I shall discuss these three methods.

A surpassing intensity or excess of devotion is one. Deeply rooted, ever-increasing, admiring love is another. The third is exceeding great, exulting joy.

As for the first, it happens at times that owing to excess of devotion “the soul cannot contain herself. She is lifted up, rapt out of herself and finally becomes transformed. When we are set alight by so great a fire of heavenly desire that everything of earth is changed into bitterness and becomes distasteful to us, and at the same time the fires of the love of our inmost heart increase in intensity beyond measure, the soul melts as though she were wax. She in some way becomes dissolved, and like the fumes of fragrant incense she mounts high, until at length she gains her freedom away on the topmost summits of Heaven” (Richard of St. Victor.) When this happens we are compelled to exclaim with the Prophet David: “My flesh and my heart have fainted away. Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever” (Ps. lxxii, 26.)

Secondly, elevation of soul may also be brought about as follows: “An ever-increasing, admiring love frequently brings to the mind such floods of Divine Light and overwhelms the soul with such a realisation of the Divine Loveliness that she becomes bewildered. Struck to her very foundations she loses hold of the body. Just as the deeper a streak of lightning strikes the quicker it mounts, so is it with the soul in the condition just described. The more such a soul discounts herself and sinks in self-abasement at the presence of God’s most admirable loveliness, so much the higher and quicker does she rise. The greater the ardour of her loving, admiring desires, the higher does she ascend. She is carried out of herself until she is elevated even to the topmost heights” (Richard of St. Victor.) There, like another Esther, she bursts forth into a paean of praise. “I saw Thee, My Lord,” she exclaims, “as an Angel of God; and my heart was troubled for fear of Thy Majesty, for Thou, My Lord, art very admirable; and Thy Face is full of graces” (Esth. xv, 16, 17.)

Finally, a similar transport occurs when exceeding, exulting joy takes possession of the soul. “When the soul has drunk of an abundance of interior sweetness and is completely inebriated with delight, she forgets altogether what she is and what she was. There and then she is transformed. She is thrown into a state of supernatural love, and is rapt into a marvelous, bliss-producing ecstasy” (Richard of St. Victor.) With the Psalmist in transport she sings: “How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts. My soul longs and faints for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God” (Ps. lxxxiii, 23.)

Thus is it that the servant of God should train herself in the practice of fervent prayer. Frequent prayer, the frequent use of prayer will teach her and render her fit to contemplate things divine. The eye of a heart purified and washed by prayer can see the things above. Purified by frequent prayer the soul comes to taste and to enjoy the sweets of God.

It is not becoming for a soul fashioned after and stamped with God's image to fritter away her time busying herself with earthly cares. A soul redeemed by Christ's Precious Blood and made for eternal happiness ought "to ascend even above the Cherubim and fly upon the wings of the wind" (Cf. Ps. xvii, ii), that is, the wings of the Angels. She ought to ascend high and contemplate the Most Holy Trinity and Christ's Sacred Humanity. She should meditate on the glory of the citizens of the city above, and ponder on the happiness of the Angels and Saints.

Tell me, who today explores into the regions of heavenly glory? Who are they that in heart and soul pass their time thinking on the things above? They are the few. We may today with truth say even of many religious what St. Bernard said: "Many who should have been devoutly penetrating the heavens, viewing there the many mansions, holding converse with the apostles and the prophets and assisting in wonder at the triumphs of the martyrs, instead find themselves as base slaves to the body, serving the flesh and pampering its gluttonous desires" (S. Bern. Sermon. xxxv on the Canticle of Cant., 3.)

CHAPTER VI

THE REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST'S PASSION

Christ's death on the Cross should live in our thoughts and imagination, for frequent thought on the Passion of Christ keeps aflame and brings to intense heat the fires of earnest piety. We must picture to the eyes of our heart Christ dying on the Cross if we would prevent the fires of devotion within us burning themselves out. An apposite quotation bears this out: "The fire on my altar shall always burn, and the priest shall feed it, putting wood on it every day" (Levit. vi, 12.)

Let me explain, most devout Mother. The altar of God is your heart. On the altar of your heart the fire of intense heat must burn constantly. You must feed the fire each day with the wood of the cross and the remembrance of the Passion of Christ. Isaiah, the prophet, preaches a similar truth: "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains" (Is. xii, 3.) In other words, if the grace of tears, the tears of thanksgiving, the tears of fervent piety are sought, such tears must be drawn from the Saviour's fountains—that is, from the five wounds of Jesus Christ.

Draw near, O handmaid, with loving steps to Jesus wounded for you, to Jesus crowned with thorns, to Jesus nailed to the gibbet of the Cross. With the Blessed Apostle St. Thomas, so not merely gaze on the print of the nails in Christ's hands; be not satisfied with putting your finger into the holes made by the nails in His hands; neither let it be sufficient even to put your hand into the wound in His side (Cf. John xx, 25, 27.) But enter bodily by the door in His side and go straight up to the very Heart of Jesus. There, burning with love for Christ Crucified, be transformed into Christ.

Fastened to the Cross by the nails of the fear of God, transfixed by the lance of the love of your inmost heart, pierced through and through by the sword of the most tender compassion, seek for nothing else, wish for nothing else, look for consolation in nothing else except in dying with Christ on the Cross. Then, at last, will you cry out with Paul the Apostle: “I have been crucified with Christ. I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. ii, 19, 20.)

When you meditate on the passion of Christ proceed as follows: Think how Christ’s sufferings were the most disgraceful, the most bitter, the most complete, and the most protracted.

In the first place, O worthy handmaid of God, dwell on the fact that the death of Jesus Christ, your Spouse, was the most disgraceful possible. I say the most disgraceful because he was crucified as a thief and a highway robber. The old Law reserved the punishment of death by crucifixion for the villainous among thieves and the utterly criminal among robbers (Cf. Num. xxv, 4; Deut. xxi, 22 sq.; II Kings xxi, 6–9; Esth. vii, 10 and ix, 13; also Gal. iii, 13.)

Reflect for a moment, and realise how Christ suffered greater disgrace than usually befell a criminal. He was crucified on Mount Calvary, a place disgusting and vile because of its associations (Matt xxvii, 33; Mark xv, 22; Luke xxiii, 33; John xix, 17; and cf. S. Bonav. on Wisd. ii 19 etc., Com. on John xix, 17; Luke xxiii, 33.) It was a heap of dead men’s bodies and bones, and was the spot given over to the execution of those condemned to death for murderous deeds. There only vile criminals were beheaded; only vile criminals were hanged or crucified.

A little more thought will enable you to realize still better the greater disgrace that was meted out to Christ. He was hanged as a robber among robbers. He was placed in the midst of robbers as the Chief, the Prince, the King of robbers. Hence we find Isaiah saying: “He was reputed with the wicked” (Is. liii, 12; cf. also Matt, xxvii. 38; Mark xv, 27; Luke xxii, 37; xxiii, 33; John xix, 18.)

Consider even a little longer how greatly disgraced was your Spouse. As though He were unfit to live or die upon the earth, He was raised into the air and was hanged between heaven and earth. O worthy indignity! O fitting injury! The earth is refused to the Lord of the earth. Nothing in the world is considered viler than the Lord of the world. His condemnation was an

insult; to crucify Him was still worse. “He was numbered and condemned among the wicked” (Isa liii, 12.) To compel Him to die shoulder to shoulder with criminals increased His shame. Lastly they put Him to death on the vile hill of Calvary and thus intensified His shame beyond understanding. Christ suffered the very extremity of insult and unparalleled disgrace.

O good Jesus, O kind Saviour, not once but often wert Thou outraged. When a man is repeatedly put to shame, his shame is thereby increased. Alas! they heaped insult upon insult on Thee! They bound thee, O Lord Jesus, with ropes in the Garden. In the house of Annas they slapped Thy face. They spat upon Thee when Thou wast in the hall of Caiaphas. They made sport and mockery of Thee in the presence of Herod. They forced Thee to carry the Cross along the road, and on Golgotha they crucified Thee. Alas, alas! The Freedom of the Captives is enslaved, the Glory of the Angels is mocked, the Life of Men is done to death! O you wretched men, you said: “Let us condemn Him to a most shameful death” (Wisd. ii, 20.) What you said you would do, you have done, and done well!

Realizing it all, St. Bernard cries out, “He emptied Himself taking the form of a servant [Phil, ii, 7.] He was a Son and He became a servant, but for Him it was insufficient to be a mere servant and to live in subjection. He took to Himself the form of a wicked servant, thus making Himself an object for the scourge and fitting Himself to pay the penalties for crimes He had never committed” (S. Bern. Holy Week Sermon. 10.) He was not merely the Servant of the servants of God, as is the Pope, but He became the Servant even of the servants of the evil one; for did He not forgive and cleanse His executioners from the guilt of the foul crimes they had committed? This did not suffice. Lest you should dread the prospect of suffering similarly, He chose a death more humiliating and more confusing than any other. “He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross” (Phil, ii, 8.) What else could have reduced Him so to nothingness?

Come now, O virgin devoted to God, and consider attentively the bitter cruelty of Christ’s sufferings. When harassed and wearied with pain, a man ordinarily finds some relief and comfort by contracting his limbs and muscles. With His hands and legs extended on the cross, movement was impossible for Christ and so such relaxation was denied Him. Worn out with sufferings, He did not find even the least ease or lessening of pain.

There was no place whereon He might rest His Divine adorable head as His soul was about to take her flight.

Let us go into the matter of Christ's bitter sufferings more closely. The more tender a body, the more acutely does it suffer (Cf. S. Bonav. Ill Sent. d. xvi, I, qu. 2.) A woman's body is more tender than a man's. There was never flesh more adapted for suffering than the virginal flesh of Christ. It was born of a Virgin, who conceived of the Holy Ghost, and the Man Christ was the tenderest of virgins. It was possible for Christ to suffer the most excruciating sufferings of all.

Actually, at the mere thought of the death that over-shadowed Him, "His soul became sad," and as the sadness reverberated in His tender flesh, "the sweat" of his Body oozed out in thick drops "as a sweat of blood dripping to the ground" (Matt, xxvi, 38; Luke xxii, 44.) What must have been the anguish and torture He endured during the course of His Passion! St. Bernard says: "O Jesus Christ, the blood which You sweated from Your sacred body, and which flowed to the ground as You prayed, most surely showed the anguish of Your heart" (S. Bern., Serm. on the Life and Pass. of the Lord, 6.)

"O sweetest Child," cried out St. Anselm, "what did You do that You should be treated so? O most Lovable of Youths, what was Your sin that Your judgment should be so severe? Alas, I am the cause of Your grief, I inflicted the deadly blow!" (S. Anselm, Prayer.)

Once again, exercise your attention and come to a better understanding of Christ's bitterly cruel death. When a person is innocent of a crime, the more innocent he is, the more poignantly does he feel the punishment inflicted. If Christ had endured the tortures of His passion because of His own sins, His sufferings would have been somewhat tolerable. But "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (I Pet. ii, 22.) Pilate bore witness to this: "I find no cause of death in Him" (Cf. John xviii, 38.) So too testifies the seventh chapter of the Book of Wisdom: He is "the brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the image of His goodness" (Wis. vii, 26.)

Consider still further how painful was the death of your beloved Spouse, Jesus Christ. Suffering is bad enough, but when every torture conceivable is inflicted, what could be more painful? Christ, your Spouse, suffered in every part of His body so that no member, not even the least, escaped its

own particular suffering. No part of His body was too small or too trivial but that it had its full share of torture. "From the sole of His foot unto the crown of His head was no soundness in Him" (Cf. Is. i, 6.)

Hence, overwhelmed with the prophetic vision of Christ's too great sufferings, Jeremiah puts the following words into the Saviour's mouth: "Oh, all ye who pass by the way, look and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow" (Lamentations, i, 12.) In very deed, my Lord Jesus Christ, there was never grief like Your grief, no sorrow like Your sorrow, no suffering comparable with Your suffering. You shed Your blood so profusely that Your body was bathed in blood.

O good Jesus, O sweetest Jesus! Not merely drops of blood, but rivers of blood flowed liberally from Your five wounds when Your body was hanging nailed to the cross! Blood flowed in torrents from Your head when you were crowned with thorns! Blood flowed from the whole of Your body whilst You were being scourged with the lash! Blood flowed from Your heart when You were pierced with the lance! If any blood remained in You, it could have been only by a miracle! Tell me, oh, tell me, O sweet Lord, why did You shed so much blood? Why did you shed all the blood of Your body? One drop of Your sacred precious blood would have sufficed for the world's redemption. Why did you do it?

I know, O Lord, why. It was simply and solely to show how much You love me.

"What return, then, shall I make to the Lord for all that He has done for me?" (Ps. cxv, 12) Most surely, my Lord, as long as I live I shall never forget how Thou spentest Thyself in my behalf. I shall bear constantly in mind Thy preaching, the weariness caused Thee by Thy travelling up and down the country, Thy vigils and prayers, Thy compassionate tears, Thy griefs, the insults that were heaped upon Thee, the spittle and the sneers, the blows, the nails and wounds. Otherwise, were I to forget these things, rightly would the blood of this Just Man, which was shed upon the earth, be required of me" (S. Bern. Holy Week Serm. ii; cf. Matt, xxii, 35.)

"Who therefore, will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes," (Jer. ix, i), that day and night I may weep for the death of my Lord Jesus Christ? He suffered death not because of His own sins, but because of mine. In the words of Isaiah, "He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins" (Is. liii, 5.)

Lastly, ponder attentively and carefully on the protracted duration of Christ's sufferings and death. Christ carried around with Him His sufferings from the beginning to the end. From the first moment of His birth to the last flicker of His life, His death and passion were ever present to His mind. The Psalmist assures us of this fact: "I am poor, and in labours from My youth" (Ps. lxxxvii, 16.) The same thought is expressed elsewhere: "I have been scourged all the day" (Ps. lxxii, 14.) That is, I have been scourged during the whole of my life.

A further thought is suggested for reflection. The arrangements made for inflicting Christ's sufferings were peculiar to His passion. Everything was done to protract the torture. He was suspended in the air that consciousness should endure and thus He would remain in pain to the end. Further, everything tended to keep Him alive, and thus the torture of a lingering death was His. Death by crucifixion kept Him conscious and in agony to the last moment.

From all that I have said, dear spouse of Christ and servant of God, you will gather a clear idea of Christ's sufferings and death. You will be able to realize somewhat how the sacred passion induced in our Lord a sense of unutterable disgrace. His sufferings were cruelly painful, and they extended to every member of His body and to every faculty of His soul. In a word, Christ's sufferings and death were unique in their kind and protracted in their duration.

Christ accepted these sufferings and death to gain your devoted love. Through thought on these sufferings and out of gratitude, He wishes you to love Him. He desires you to love Him with your whole heart, with your whole mind, and with your whole soul (Cf. Matt, xxii, 37.) To save a slave He became a slave. What could prove better His kindness of heart? What better incentive to enable us to work for our own salvation could He give than His own example? To appease the divine anger He accepted the death that the justice of God demanded and thereby gave us an example of obedience.

Could you name a better inducement to love God than this love that the Son of God has shown for you? In spite of our worthlessness, though we deserve punishment, He "laid down His life" (Cf. John x, 15) for us. His kindness reached such depths and such heights that it is impossible to imagine anything more tender, more kind or more lovable. The greatness of

His love becomes more evident the more we realize the abject and terrible nature of Christ's sufferings. For God "spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; how hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?" (Rom. viii, 32.) This is the way God has loved us, and has invited us to love Him and to imitate Him in His love for us.

Woe, therefore, to those who are ungrateful for the benefits accruing to them from this great kindness of Christ! Woe to those in whose souls the death of Christ produces no good effects! "Look," says St. Bernard, "at Christ on the Cross! Look at Him, His head bent down as though He longed to stoop to kiss us! Look at Him, His arms extended to take us in a loving embrace! Look at His hands so deeply pierced to pour out riches for our benefit. Look at His sacred side opened wide to permit the love of His heart to reach us! Look at Him, His whole body extended to give Himself entirely to us! Woe to those, I say it a second time, who by their sins 'crucify again to themselves the Son of God' [Heb. vi, 6,] and have added to the grief of His wounds." (Ps. lxxviii, 27.)

Woe, further, to those whose hearts will not soften nor give way to grief at the thought of Christ's sufferings. Woe to those whom the shedding of God's blood in such abundance and the payment of such a great price cannot warm and inflame to the practice of virtue, kind charity and good works! Certainly, such people are "the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil, iii, 18.) On a day long since past, onlookers blasphemed Christ hanging on the Cross. Sinners do worse. They blaspheme Christ the Son of God sitting at the right hand of His Father in Heaven.

Speaking through the mouth of His servant St. Bernard, Our Lord complains of these ungrateful ones and rebukes them. "Man," He says, "look what I suffer for you. What grief is there such as I suffer? In the act of dying for you I appeal to you. Look at the sufferings heaped upon Me. Look at the nails which dig into My flesh. You can see the exterior suffering, but My interior grief of heart is greater still when I realise that in spite of all you remain so ungrateful" (S. Bern. III Sent. d. 16.)

Take care, Mother, lest you be wanting in gratitude for such benefits. A great price has been paid for you. Have a care lest you be lacking in devotion or show too little attachment to Christ. Place Jesus Christ "as a seal on your heart" (Cf. Cant, viii, 6.) Just as a seal is impressed upon soft wax, impress your Spouse Jesus Christ on your heart. Say to Him with the

Prophet: “My heart is become like melting wax” (Ps. xxi, 15.) Put Him “as a seal upon thy arm” (Cf. Cant, viii, 6) so that you may never cease doing good and may never tire of working for the honour of the name of your Lord Jesus Christ. When you have done everything, when you have spent yourself in His service, begin afresh, as though you had never done anything for Him.

If ever anything sad befalls you, or anything grieves you, or if perchance something causes you weariness or bitterness of heart, or sweetness of soul turns insipid, lift up immediately your eyes to your Lord hanging nailed to the Cross. Look upon Him, His head crowned with thorns! Gaze upon the nails, the iron nails which fasten Him to the Cross, and upon the lance piercing His sacred side. In all trying moments, picture and contemplate the wounds in His hands and feet, picture to yourself the wounds in His most blessed head, the wound in His sacred side, the wounds of His whole body. Call to mind that He was wounded for your sake, that he suffered for you and that His sufferings were so great because He loved you beyond compare.

Believe me, a glance at such pictures and thought on such sufferings will quickly change your sadness into joy. What was heavy to bear will become light. What causes your weariness will become something to love. The rugged and the difficult will be changed into sweetness and relish, so that soon, with Holy Job, you will begin to exclaim: “The things which before my soul would not touch,” now when I look upon the “anguish” of Christ “are my meats” (Job vi, 7.) It is as though you were to say: The good things which were distasteful to my soul are now become through the passion of Christ, which I realise, sweet and savory.

In the Chronicles of the Franciscan Order there is related the following story (Cf. Chronicles xxiv, 3): A certain man being converted and having entered the Order eventually became impatient with the frugality of the Friars. The discipline of the Friary, too, upset him. Once, being very perturbed and lost to all patience on account of these things, he threw himself down before a crucifix. With bitter tears he enumerated the intolerable hardships he was called upon to endure: the burdens of the religious life, the scant and frugal fare, the tastelessness of the food and drink. While he poured forth his grievances, suddenly blood began to ooze from the side of the image of Christ nailed to the cross. As he continued his

weeping and wailing, the bleeding image of the crucified Christ spoke to him these words: “When you find your food or drink distasteful, dip it into the sauce of the blood of Christ.”

CHAPTER VII

THE PERFECT LOVE OF GOD

Earlier on, guided by the Holy Spirit, I explained to you how you should train your faculties so that passing from “virtue to virtue” (Ps. lxxxiii, 8), you might advance step by step in the way of holiness. I come now to the soul or the life-giving principle of all the virtues. I refer to charity, the virtue alone capable of leading a man to real holiness. In mortifying the flesh, in overcoming sin and in attaining to grace, nothing avails like charity. Would you reach the highest rung of the ladder of perfection? Nothing could possibly be devised to help you more than charity.

In his book on the contemplative life Prosper writes: “Charity is the life of virtue and the death of vice” (Prosper iii, 13.) “As wax melts before the fire so” vices “vanish into nothingness” when they come “face to face” with charity (Cf. Ps. lxvii, 3.) Charity is a virtue of such power that it can both close the gates of hell and open wide the portals of eternal bliss. Charity provides the hope of salvation and alone renders us lovable in God’s sight. It is so great a virtue that among the virtues it is called the virtue. To be founded and rooted in charity is to be wealthy and happy, for without charity we are indigent and wretched (Cf. Apoc. iii, 17.)

Commenting on the words of St. Paul (I Cor. xiii, 2), “If I have not charity,” Peter Lombard quoting St. Augustine says: “Just think a moment on the excellence of charity. Without charity it is useless to possess all else; possess it, and you have everything. To begin to possess it is to possess the Holy Ghost” (Peter Lomb. Comm. on I Cor., quoting S. Aug.) Elsewhere St. Augustine says: “If it is the practice of virtue which leads to Heaven, I unhesitatingly affirm that the virtue to be practised is the pure love of God” (S. Aug. De Morib. Ecc., I, xv, 25.)

Since it is a virtue of supreme importance, charity must be insisted on before all else. Let it be well noted, however, that the charity leading to the possession of God is not any charity, but solely the charity, the love that loves God above all things and loves God's creatures for God's sake.

The Holy Gospel gives a clear lead on the qualities of this love for God. "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind" (Matt, xxii, 37; Mark xii, 30; Luke x, 27.) Think well, most cherished handmaid of Jesus Christ, on the love which your Beloved Jesus demands from you. He, your Best Beloved, wishes you to love, and to love Him most lovingly. He desires that you give yourself body and soul, mind and heart entirely to love for Him. He wishes to share your love with no one else. He commands that you be all His.

How is this to be done? What are you to do so that there can be no doubt that you love the Lord God with your whole heart? How is the love of the whole heart given?

For answer, let me quote St. John Chrysostom: "To love God with your whole heart it is required that nothing attract your heart more than God attracts it. You must not take more pleasure in the things of earth than in God. Honours and places of position, love of father and mother and relatives must not count in the scale of love before love of God. Be it friend or relative, place or position, be it what it may, if anything takes up your heart's love more than God, you do not love God with your whole heart." (S. Chrys., Hom. on Matt.)

I beg you, dear handmaid of Christ, not to deceive yourself about your love. If you love anything which is not in God, or if loving you do not love for God's sake, you do not yet love God with your whole heart. It is on this account that St. Augustine writes: "O Lord, whoever divides his love with You and anything or anyone else, gives You less love than is Your due" (S. Aug. Conf. xxix, 40.) If your love for anything does not lead you to greater love for God, you do not yet love Him with your whole heart. If for the love of anything dear to you, you neglect to give Christ those things that are His by right, again I say, you do not love Him with your whole heart.

We must love Our Lord Jesus Christ not only with all our heart, but also with all our soul. The same blessed St. Augustine explains how this is to be done. "To love God with one's whole soul, is so to center the will on loving Him that nothing in any way opposed to Him wins the least of our love. For

the soul to give in its entirety all the love of which its faculties are capable, she must willingly, without the least reluctance or reserve, give her love in full accord with all Her Lord's desires" (S. Aug. Sermon. cviii, 35.)

To love Him because it pleases you to give him your love, or because the world recommends, or the flesh suggests, such love, is not the love God asks. If for the love of Jesus Christ you would be prepared gallantly and lovingly to die in His service should occasion arise, then most certainly you do love Him with your whole soul. If you do not love Him for His own sake or would find it difficult to die for His sake, your love is imperfect. It is not the love of your whole soul that you offer Him. Conform your will in all things to the Divine Will. This is what God demands. Do this, and the love wherewith you love God will be the love of your whole soul.

Not only must you love your Spouse, Jesus Christ, with your whole heart and soul, you must also love Him with your whole mind. What "with your whole mind" means, St. Augustine explains: "To love God with all the love of which the mind is capable is to love Him unceasingly. It means that He must never be absent from our loving thoughts. Memory must keep Him constantly in mind" (S. Aug. Sermon. cviii.)

CHAPTER VIII

FINAL PERSEVERANCE

It is not enough to be virtuous. To be firmly rooted in virtue, to possess virtuous habits, does not render us glorious in God's sight. Something else is still wanting. To be an object of glory to the eye of God we must possess the culminating virtue, the crown and consummation of all virtues: perseverance. No mortal being whatever, no matter how perfect He may seem, should be praised while he is still living. Let a man be praised not because he has begun a good work but because he has brought it to a good and happy completion. "Perseverance is the end, acme and crown of the virtues. It nurtures and fits one for merit; it leads to and culminates in reward" (S. Bern. Ep. cxxix, 2.)

Hence St. Bernard says, "Take away perseverance and nothing remains. For the fulfilment of duty, the performance of good deeds and the exercise of fortitude will not procure the grace sufficient to obtain eternal praise" (Ibid.) It will avail a man little to have been a religious, to have been patient and humble, devout and chaste, to have loved God and to have exercised himself in all the virtues, if he continues not to the end. He must persevere to win the crown. In the race of the spiritual life all the virtues run, but only perseverance "receives the prize" (1 Cor. ix, 24.) It is not the beginner in virtue but "he that shall persevere unto the end that shall be saved" (Matt. x, 22.) "What is the use of seeds sprouting if afterwards they wither and die?" asks St. Chrysostom (S. Chrys., Hom. xxxiii, 5.) None whatever!

If then, dear spouse of Jesus Christ, your virtues are productive of good works—and I assume that this is so—be sure to continue in your good practices. Persevere in your virtuous habits. Make it a practice ever and constantly to increase in the performance of good works. Wage the war of Christ with all your might. Practise and increase in virtue up to the very

moment of death. Then, when your last moment comes and your life is brought to a close, God will give you the crown of honour and glory as the prize and reward of your labour.

Your Best Beloved Lord Jesus Christ has assured you of this. These are His words, written for your instruction by the inspired author of the Apocalypse: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life” (Apoc. ii, 10.) What is this crown if not the reward of eternal life? The heart of every Christian ought to burn with the desire of winning this reward. In value there is nothing comparable to it; it is priceless. It surpasses the mathematician’s power, says St. Gregory, to count its varying parts and manifold possibilities (Cf. S. Greg. II Hom. on Gospels xxxvii, I.) There is no limit to its duration. It is to be enjoyed eternally. It can never cease.

Your Beloved Spouse Jesus Christ invites you to win this prize, to gain this crown. Listen to what He says to you in the Canticle of Canticles: “Come from Libanus, my Spouse, come my friend from Libanus, come and thou shalt be crowned” (Cant, iv, 8.) “Arise at once,” you who call yourself “the friend” of God, the spouse of Jesus Christ, the best beloved of the Eternal King, “come, make haste” (Cant, ii, 10) to the marriage feast of the Son of God (Cf. Apoc. xix, 9.) “Everything is prepared” (Matt, xxii, 4); the whole court of Heaven awaits you (Cf. S. Bonav. Soliloq.)

Three wonderful joys are prepared for you in the heavenly Kingdom. First, there is a servant of noble lineage, beautiful to look upon, who will be at your beck and call. Second, there is a food of priceless worth and alluring in its sweetness to refresh you. Third, there is a society, sweet and delightful and lovable beyond conception. Such fellowship will intensify your joy.

Arise then and speed with haste to the nuptials, because of the transcendent beauty of the servant who waits to perform your commands. That servant is not one only, for the whole angelic assembly—yes, even the very Son of God will be in readiness to attend to your wants. Listen to what He says of Himself as reported in the Holy Gospel of St. Luke: “Amen, I say to you, that He will gird Himself, and make them sit down at table, and passing, will minister unto them” (Luke xii, 37; Cf. S. Bonav. Soliloq. iv, 12.) Ah, then, indeed great will be the glory of the poor and lowly, to have the Son of God, the Eternal King ministering to their wants and the whole court of Heaven diligently obeying their behests.

A precious, delight-giving food, a food to refresh you, awaits you there. The very Son of God with His own hands will prepare the table. He pledged His word to this, as we read in St. Luke: "I dispose to you, as my Father has disposed to me a Kingdom; that you may eat and drink at my table, in my Kingdom" (Luke xxii, 29 & 30.) Oh, how sweet and luscious is that food which God in all His sweetness has prepared for the poor! (Cf. Ps. lxvii, ii.) Oh, how blessed will he be who eats that food in the Kingdom of Heaven! In the precincts of the virginal womb of Mary that food was prepared by the burning love of the Holy Ghost. "If any man eats of this Bread he shall live forever" (John vi, 52.)

With such food, with such bread the King of Heaven feeds and refreshes His chosen ones. This we are told also in the book of Wisdom. "Thou didst feed Thy people with the food of Angels and gavest them bread from Heaven, prepared without labour, having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste, and serving every man's will" (Wisd. xvi, 20, 21.) Such, in a word, is the repast provided at the heavenly table.

There is also a loving and exceedingly lovable fellowship prepared, that your happiness in Heaven may be complete. There the company will be the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, together with Mary and her throng of chaste virgins. There you will dwell with the Apostles, the Martyrs, the Confessors, the whole army of the elect. How altogether miserable it will be for those who fail to be associated with this most noble band! If there is one who does not long to have part in this fellowship, all desire in him must be dead.

You, O most noble handmaid of Christ, I know, desire Christ. You are striving to gain possession of Christ and you are striving with all your might. Your great desire is to languish in the companionship and embraces of the Eternal King.

"Well now, have courage, inflame your heart, arouse your soul, keep your intellect on the alert and think well on what you are able to do. If each good thing separately may furnish delight, reflect how replete with delight must be the good that contains all the delight which all good things can produce collectively. If the life of the creature is good, what goodness must there be in the Creator of life? If the health of the body is an inestimable delight, what is to be said of that Health, that saving Power which is the Author of all health and salvation, whether of soul or body?

“When one possesses this great Good there is no limit to one’s possessions. There is nothing that does not belong to him. Whatever he desires will be his. Whatever he does not want he will not have. In Heaven, undoubtedly, will be found the good things of soul and body—good things such as ‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and that have neither entered into the heart of man’ [I Cor. ii, 9.] Why then do you wander about so much, searching for good things for soul and body? Love the One Only Good. Love the Good in which all other good is contained. That One Good suffices. Long for that Goodness alone which is all that is Good. It is all that you need” (S. Anselm, Proslog. xxiv & xxvi.)

“In Heaven, Mother dear, all that you love, all that you desire is to be found. What is it you love? O loving virgin, on what do you center all the desires of your heart?

“Is it beauty which charms you and claims your love? If so, In Heaven ‘the just shall shine as the sun’ [Matt. xiii, 43.]

“If a long life, a life full of health is what you mostly wish, in Heaven you will realize your desire, for there the righteous shall live forever. ‘The salvation of the just is for evermore’ [Wisd. v, 16; Ps. xxxvi, 39.]

“Is it a complete, a total satisfaction that you crave? If so, ‘there they will be satisfied when the glory of God shall appear’ [Cf. Ps. xvi, 15.]

“Would you be inebriated, intoxicated with delight? ‘They shall be inebriated with the plenty of the house of God’ [Cf. Ps. xxxv, 9.]

“Do you look to be delighted with sweet melody? Well, in Heaven the Angelic Choirs chant in harmony praising God without ceasing.

“Is it in loving friendship you seek your delight? In Heaven the Saints love God more than themselves. So, too, they love each other more than themselves and God loves them infinitely more than they love themselves.

“Should it be peace of heart and union which appeal to you, realise that in Heaven there is no will but the Will of God.

“If honour and riches please you, God ‘will place’ His servants and his handmaids ‘over many things’ [Matt, xxv, 21.] 215 They ‘shall be called,’ and will be indeed, ‘the sons and daughters, the children of God’ [Matt, v, 9.] Where God is there they also shall be who are ‘the heirs indeed of God, and co-heirs with Christ’ [Cf. John xii, 26 and Rom. viii, 17.]” (S. Anselm, Proslog. xxv.)

“Where goodness to such a degree and to such an excess exists, what will be the qualities and extent of the joy there to be found? Certainly, O Lord Jesus, ‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither in this life hath it entered into the heart of man’ [I Cor ii, 9] to conceive how Thy Blessed ones will love Thee and rejoice on Thy account when they revel in heavenly bliss” (S. Anselm, Proslog. xxvi.)

Whatever measure men set for their love of God here will be the measure of their rejoicing with God in Heaven. Therefore love God intensely here, and your rejoicing will be intense hereafter. Continue to grow in the love of God here, and afterwards in Heaven you will possess the fullness of eternal joy. “Ponder in mind on the joy of Heaven, talk it over with yourself, love it with all your heart and speak of it to others. Let your soul hunger and your body thirst for it. Long for it with all your being until at last you ‘enter into the joy of your Lord’ [Matt. xxv, 21.]” (S. Anselm, *ibid.*)

Sigh for it until you fall into the loving embrace of your Spouse and are introduced by Him into His own bridal chamber, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit He lives and reigns, One God, for ever and ever. AMEN.

LIFE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

SAINT BONAVENTURE

AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN.

P. J. KENEDY & SONS PUBLISHERS TO THE HOLY APOSTOLIC SEE 44 BARCLAY
STREET, NEW YORK

IMPRIMATUR: JOHN CARD. MCCLOSKEY ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK MARCH
29TH, 1881

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ASCRIBED TO ST. BERNARD.

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PARS IV. -AD LATUS

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PARS VII. -AD COR

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XIV

LIFE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST

ST. BONAVENTURE'S PREFACE

AMONG the many encomiums and praises bestowed on the holy Virgin, St. Cecilie, it is recorded of her, that she kept the Gospel of Christ continually enshrined in her breast : the meaning of which seems to be, that she selected such passages from our Lord's life and actions, contained in that divine volume, as tended most to raise her devotion, and inflame her love. On these she meditated day and night, and such was the fervor of her heart, and the ardor of her affections, that she did not content herself with a single perusal, but was accustomed to read the most striking parts many times over, and carefully deposit them in the sanctuary of her heart. The like practice I recommend to you, as I look upon it to be the most material branch of spiritual study, and even the most beneficial of all devout exercises, and that which is most capable of leading you to the summit of Christian perfection. For surely the holy life of Christ, not merely free from the minutest blemish, but even divinely perfect, must be the best and only sure fountain whence we can hope to draw the perfect knowledge necessary to arm our breast against the flattering, yet fleeting vanities of the world ; to render us steady amidst tribulations and adversities ; and finally, to preserve us from vice, and facilitate the possession of every virtue. Frequent and habitual meditations on that divine subject being the readiest means to introduce the soul, as it were, into such a kind of familiarity, confidence, and love of him, as will insensibly create in it a contempt and distaste of everything else, and will effectually instruct it, both in what to do, and what to avoid doing.

And first, that the contemplation of Christ's blessed life strengthens the heart against the transient pleasures and deceitful vanities of the world, sufficiently appears in the life of the sacred virgin, St. Cecilie, already mentioned, whose capacious heart was so filled with the divine sentiments gathered thence, that it had no space left for the entrance of vain affections. Even amidst the allurements of magnificence, the dissipations of music and

other sensual pleasures, profusely combining to render the solemnity of her nuptials the more inviting to the sense, her heart, unaffected by them, and, as it were, insensible of all these flattering appearances, remained immovably fixed on God, to whom she often recurred in these words : “ O Lord ! render my body and heart pure and undefiled, that I be not confounded”

Secondly, that it renders us steady amidst tribulations and adversities. St. Bernard thus argues :” Whence received the martyrs their unshaken resolutions amidst the anxiety of their torments but from the sacred wounds of Jesus, in which their hearts and affections were wholly centered ? Whilst they beheld and felt their bodies torn and severed on the rack, their minds remained still cheerful and triumphant. And where can we then suppose the soul of each glorious sufferer to have been but in the wounds of Christ, ready to open for its reception ? Had it been lodged in its own bosom, attentive to what passed within its lacerated frame, it had been too sensible of the torturing instrument, to remain proof against the excruciating torments inflicted ; its pains had been an over match for its patience ; it must have sunk under the pressing weight, and denied God.” From the same divine source not only martyrs, but even confessors, virgins, and all who lead a virtuous life, have derived their patience amidst tribulations, and the various trials and infirmities incident to a mortal state ; as may be instanced in the glorious St. Francis and St. Clare, who, under the severe pressure of afflictions, penury, and infirmities, were not only patient, but joyful. The same may be daily remarked in all devout persons ; this is entirely owing to their pious meditations on the life of Christ, which, as it were, carry their souls out of their bodies to transplant them in Christ. Thirdly, that it is a powerful check to vice, and greatly disposes us to the possession of virtues, is evident from this, that the perfection of virtues is only to be found in the blessed life of Jesus Christ. Where else shall we find such moving examples, such sublime doctrines of heroic poverty, extraordinary humility, profound wisdom, fervent prayers, obedience, meekness, patience, and other virtues, as in this most holy life ?

Wherefore, St. Bernard says, “ that he labors in vain in the pursuit of virtue, who hopes to find it anywhere but in the Lord of virtues, whose doctrine is the school of prudence, whose mercy is the work of justice, whose life is the model of temperance, and whose death is the pledge of

fortitude.” Whoever, therefore, follows this divine pattern, can neither be deceived himself, nor deceive others, for the soul by frequent reflection on his virtues, is both animated and instructed in the imitation and pursuit of them, and at length becomes so habituated to virtue, that the bare light of it is sufficient to direct her judgment in discerning truth from falsehood. This is so true, that many very illiterate persons have become, by the same means, profoundly versed in the most sublime mysteries of God. By what other means than that of a familiar and mental conversation with his divine Lord could St. Francis of Assisium, attain to such an eminent state of perfection, so deep a knowledge of the holy scriptures, and that discernment with which he discovered the frauds of his spiritual enemies, and baffled the power of vice ? Hence it was, that he grew so passionately affected with the life of Christ, as to render his own life almost a picture of it. He copied to the utmost of his power, the practice of every virtue ; and Christ, at length, crowning his affections with the accomplishment of his wishes, he became totally transformed into his Saviour, and received the implosion of his sacred wounds on his person. To such an eminent state is the soul led by meditating on the life of its Saviour : and yet this is but, as it were, the foundation on which the soul rises to more sublime degrees of contemplation. For the unction therein to be found purifying by degrees, and elevates the soul, instructs it, and renders it full of all divine knowledge : but this tends not immediately to our present purpose.

Now, I propose to introduce you, gentle reader, to the meditations on the blessed life of our Saviour, though I could wish you a more learned and able guide, being myself very unequal to so great a task. However, as I conceive it to be more for your advantage that I rather say something than remain silent on so useful a subject, I shall endeavor to make the best use of my slender ability, by discoursing in a familiar, though plain and unpolished style : that you may the more easily comprehend the matter here treated, and study rather to improve your mind and heart than flatter your ears.

It is not elegance of speech, but the study of the life of Jesus you are here to give attention to. For as St. Hierom says, “ Plain language reaches the heart, while florid speeches stop at the ears which they flatter.” Still I am in hopes that the mediocrity of my capacity will the better be adapted to the sincerity of your good intention. But I hope still more, that if you are but diligent in the exercise of this devout study, that the Lord, whose life is here

treated of, will become your master and instructor. You are not, however, to imagine that we can either meditate on, or recollect every circumstance relating to our blessed Saviour. Nevertheless, to make the more devout impression upon your mind, i shall relate those things in the same manner as if they really had happened, which either have in fact, or may reasonably be Relieved to have happened, according to such devout imaginations as a pious mind is capable of forming. For it is even in the study of holy scriptures allowable to meditate, expound, and understand differently as we conceive most expedient. In this, however, all due regard must be paid to the truth of the facts of his life, to his justice and divine doctrine, and nothing be inconsistent with faith and good works. Whatever, therefore, I shall here lay down as acted or said by Christ Jesus which cannot be proved by scripture to be so done or said, you are to take in no other sense than as the effect of a devout meditation : that is, in other words, take it as if I said, meditate or consider, that Christ might have said or done so. If, therefore, you are desirous of reaping fruit from this work, you must earnestly endeavor by a serious attention to be present to everything that is here written of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that with the same fervor and devotion as if you both heard and saw them, laying aside for the time all other engagements and affairs. In short, beloved reader, I beseech you to accept in good part, the pains I have here taken for the honor and praise of our Lord Jesus, and for your spiritual profit, as well as my own ; and endeavor, with all the alacrity, devotion, and diligence you are master of to put it in practice.

CHAPTER I

THE ANGELS INTERCEDE FOR MAN'S REDEMPTION

MANKIND having for the long and tedious space of more than five thousand years continued in a miserable state of exile, not one of them being able to shake off the clog of original guilt, and soar to his native country Heaven ; the blessed choir of angelic spirits, (moved to compassion, and concerned at the dreadful havoc sin had made among them, as well as solicitous to see the numbers of their own heavenly legions again completed) as soon as the fulness of time was come, resolved to renew the instances they had often before made to the Almighty. For this end, presenting themselves before the awful throne of God, with redoubled earnestness and devotion, they jointly prostrated themselves at his feet, and made the following prayer: “All merciful Lord! Remember how you graciously vouchsafed, from the inexhaustible fund of your goodness, to create man out of nothing, and to raise him above all the works of your sublunary creation, by enriching him with the eminent gift of a rational soul, capable of knowing you ; and this on purpose that he might become a partaker of our felicity, and repair the loss we sustained by the fall of our reprobate brethren. Yet behold, O gracious Sovereign, the whole species lies still involved in such woeful ruin, that out of so great a number, not one has been able to escape and arrive hither in the long space of many thousand years. Our enemies thence gather new matter of triumph : when instead of seeing the vacant places of the fallen angels filled, they behold hell continually crowded with innumerable victims : to what end then are they created, Lord ? Why are the souls, that confess to you, delivered up a prey to beasts Ps.I xxiii. We are not ignorant that this severity perfectly agrees

with your divine justice ; yet be pleased, O Lord, to remember, that the time for showing your mercy is come. If the first progenitors of the human race did unhappily transgress your law, let your mercy now repair the injury in their wretched posterity. Be mindful that you created them to your own likeness. Extend then in pity, O God, your hand to them, and replenish them with your bounty. To this end, our eyes fixed on you, as the eyes of servants on the hands of their masters Ps. cxxii. till you deign to have compassion on mankind, and save them by a plentiful redemption.”

The angel having concluded this address, Mercy and Peace, supporting the petition in man’s behalf, pathetically pleaded for his redemption with the heavenly Father : while Justice and Truth seemed to make a vigorous opposition against it : whence (for contemplation sake) we may imagine a kind of ineffable debate to arise between them, as St. Bernard relates in a beautiful and ample manner. But in this I shall be as concise as the tenor of our subject will permit. For though in this treatise, I intend often to interweave his words with my own, yet as our present purpose requires us to avoid tedious prolixity, I shall differ partly in the manner of applying them. To return then to our subject. The sum of his discourse, in the place above quoted, is as follows : Mercy, in the words of the royal prophet says,” Will God reject man forever, or hath the Lord forgotten to show mercy?” Ps.I xxvi. Long and frequently importuned with these, and such like solicitations, thus at length, the Almighty may be supposed to have answered, “Hold, Mercy, before I acquiesce to your petitions, it becomes me as an equitable judge, to hear the allegations which Justice and Truth have to offer against them.” Whereupon, the two divine attributes being ready to the summons, Mercy thus resumes, “Mankind, Lord, stand in need of thy commiseration, for they are become wretched indeed, even extremely wretched ; and the time for showing pity is more than come.” Here Truth, interrupting the plea of Mercy, begins, “It is meet, O Lord, that you fulfill your divine word. Let Adam die, and all his race with him, since all, in him, impiously tasted the forbidden fruit.” ‘ Wherefore then, O Lord,” replies Mercy, “ wherefore do I subsist ? if you forbear forever to commiserate, there is an end of me : this, your Truth must acknowledge.” “Yes,” rejoins Truth, “but yet, O Eternal Father, if prevaricating man can elude your sentence, what becomes of me ? Can I, as you have promised, persist to eternity?” Thus the divine pleaders continuing to support their suit against

each other, the Eternal Father, at length, remits the cause to his Son. Before whom, Mercy and Truth renewing their former pleas, Truth thus added, "I confess, Lord, that the zeal which Mercy exerts in man's behalf is good, and worthy all praise ; but does she therein act conformably to justice, in persuading you rather to spare those prevaricators than me her sister attribute?" "Ah, beloved Truth," replies Mercy, "rather consider, that your indignant rigor spares neither man nor me : by refusing to commiserate him, you involve me in his destruction, me, your sister Mercy." But Truth, unsoothed by all that Mercy could offer, still further urged : "You, O Lord, are here made a party in this cause, and therefore, it highly behooves you not to suffer the word of your Eternal Father to be made void." After this manner persisted the divine parties in opposing each other, till at length, all-uniting Peace with her heavenly voice interposing, thus addressed them : "Cease to dispute, ye heavenly offspring of God, contention ill suits such kindred virtues." Still the debate was important, and the reasons on both sides so strong and powerful, that no means appeared of reconciling Mercy and Truth, in regard to mankind, till the divine and royal judge gave to Peace, who stood the nearest to his awful throne, the following ineffable decree to read: "Whereas, our Eternal Father's divine offspring, Truth and Mercy, have laid before us their opposite allegations concerning the salvation or perdition of our hapless creature, man : the former alleging that, if the sentence of death passed upon Adam should be reversed, Mercy herself must be involved in the destruction of Adam. Our divine wisdom suggests us a medium to preserve both inviolable and uninjured. Let Death then be made a desirable good : that the apprehensions of all may be removed and their ends obtained." No sooner was the divine decree pronounced, than all, applauding its wisdom, silently consented that Adam should die, yet Death be a means of saving mercy to him. But hence, a new difficulty arose: "How, O unsearchable wisdom, how shall Death become a desirable good to man, when the bare sound of it is sufficient to convey horror to the sense?" "Know," answers the heavenly monarch, "that though the death of the wicked be superlatively wretched, that of the righteous is inestimably precious, and the sure entrance to eternal life.

" Let one then be sought out, who, though not by nature subject to death,* will voluntarily submit to it, from a generous motive of

disinterested charity. Such a one, not liable to be detained in subjection by Death, will force a passage through it, and lead

*Death entered by sin.

captivity after him to a blessed state of freedom.” Here all acquiesce with pleasure to the divine proposal. “Yet where,” say they, “shall we be able to find such a one;” Submissively, however, obsequious. to the Eternal Word’s decree, without waiting a reply, and paying due adoration to the Almighty Majesty, both depart in search of him : Truth resolving to range the earth, and Mercy the wide dominions of heaven, according to the words of the Prophet: Thy mercy, Lord, is in heaven, and thy truth even to the clouds.” Ps. xxxv., “it encompasses the universe.” Yet how vain, alas, their researches ! Truth traveling round the world, finds no one free from guilt, not even the infant of a day old. And Mercy in vain seeks, throughout heaven, one who has charity equal to so great an undertaking. Alas ! all mankind are but inferior servants, and the best of them must, even when they act well, say from St. Like, chap, xvii.,” that they are but unprofitable servants.” As none, therefore, could be found so abounding in charity, as to lay down their life for such useless servants, it was to no purpose for Mercy and Truth to seek any longer. Hence returning to the Almighty’s presence at the appointed time, without the desired success, Peace, with a benevolent countenance thus anticipates them: “ Ah ! heavenly sisters, know you not, or have you forgotten, that there is not one on earth who does good : No, not even one. Or who in heaven or on earth but he, whose wisdom gave you the ineffable advice you are endeavoring to follow, can assist you to effect it?” On hearing this, the all-wise monarch spoke. “It repents me that I made man : Yet, as I have made him, it becomes the immensity of my goodness to do satisfaction for him.” Wherefore, calling to him the angel Gabriel, “Go,” says he, “and tell the daughter of Sion: Behold your king comes.” Thus far from St. Bernard. Hence you may see of how dangerous and fatal consequence in has been and still is, and how great the difficulty of applying the remedy to it. To this purpose, however, the above mentioned attributes seem best to accord and unite in the person of God the Son. For on one side, the person of the Father, bearing in appearance a terrible and powerful aspect, might seemingly give cause of apprehension for Peace and Mercy. On the other side, the person of the Holy Ghost, all bountiful and gracious, might seemingly give no less room for apprehension to Truth and

Justice. So that the person of the Son between both, was wisely accepted as mediator in the important work. This, however, must be understood, not in a strict sense, but a mystical and borrowed one. Thus, then, was at length fulfilled that prophecy of the Psalmist, “Mercy and Truth have met together, Justice and Peace have kissed.” Ps.I xxxiv.

This may suffice for a pious meditation on what, we may devoutly conceive, might probably pass in heaven, relating to man’s redemption.

CHAPTER II

OF THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, AND HER SEVEN PETITIONS TO GOD

THE life of the Blessed Virgin, from whom the Son of God took flesh, will afford our devotion ample matter for meditation. You are then to know, Christian reader, that at the third year of her age, she was presented in the temple a sacrifice to God ; and there remained to the age of fourteen. What was her method of life in that holy sanctuary, during that space of time, we may learn from the Revelations, with which she favored a devout votary of hers ; who, as it is believed, was the glorious St. Elizabeth, whose solemn festival the church annually celebrates. Among the rest, the following particulars are contained : “When my parents,” says our Blessed Lady, “had consecrated me in the temple, immediately on their departure I resolved in my own heart to choose God for my father : and often and devoutly considering what I might do to please God, and render myself agreeable in his sight, that he might vouchsafe to enrich me with his grace ; I began, by taking care to be instructed in the divine laws. But of all the divine laws which I observed in my heart, these three were the first and chief : Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy spirit, with all thy strength : Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself : Thou shalt not hate thy enemy. These I kept in my mind ; and immediately possessed all the virtues comprised in them ; and thus will I have you to do. But the soul can possess no virtue, that has not a cordial love for God. For it is from this love that flows the plenitude of all grace, without which no virtue can enter into, or remain in the soul ; but drops away like water,

unless due hatred be conceived towards its enemies, that is, vice and evil habits. Whoever, therefore, is desirous of possessing the grace of God, must dispose his heart to love and hatred. I would have you, therefore, to follow my example, and do as I did. I rose constantly at midnight, and before the holy altar of the temple, with all the desire, will, and affection I was capable of, I implored the grace of the Almighty God, to observe these three great commandments chiefly, and every other precept of his law. And thus, before the sacred altar, I made the following seven petitions: I requested then : First His grace, to fulfill the precept of charity, that is to love him with all my heart, etc. Secondly The grace necessary to love my neighbor according to his will and pleasure, and to delight in all things that please him. Thirdly His assistance to hate and shun every thing displeasing to him. Fourthly Humility, patience, benignity, and meekness, and every virtue that could render me agreeable in his sight. Fifthly That he would make known to me the time in which that ever-blessed virgin should be born, who was to bring forth the Son of God ; and that he would preserve my sight, that I might behold her ; my tongue that I might praise her : my hands that I might minister to her : my feet that I might move in her service : and my knees that I might adore the Son of God in her womb. Sixthly I implored his grace, to obey the precepts and direction of the priests of the temple. And, Seventhly That he would vouchsafe to preserve the temple and people in his holy service.”

The servant of Christ, when she heard this, said : “ most amiable lady, were not you full of grace and every virtue ?” “Yes,” answered the Blessed Virgin : “Yet know for certain, that I thought myself as void of merit, as full of guilt, and as unworthy God’s favor as you. For which reason, I continued thus praying for grace and virtue. But although you may imagine me to have possessed all the grace I was endowed with, with little or no pains, yet, be assured, that I received no one grace, gift or virtue from Heaven, without immense labor, incessant prayer, fervent desires, profound devotion, many tears, and much affliction : Ever saying and thinking, to the best of my knowledge and power, what was most agreeable to him. Xor did I receive any blessings from Heaven, without all this, except the sanctifying grace, by which I was made holy in the womb of my mother. Know also,” adds she, “ that no grace descends into the soul, but by means of prayer and mortification.” However, when once we pay to God all the little services in

our power, though they are but few, they are of such efficacy as to attract the Almighty himself into the soul, and with him some of his choicest gifts. Insomuch, that the soul seems in a sublime measure to be carried out of itself, and forgets ever having done, or even said anything pleasing to Heaven, becoming more unworthy and contemptible in its own esteem than ever. Thus much may we gather from the above-mentioned Revelations.

St. Jerome, however, in the account he gives of her life, adds : “That it was the constant method of the Blessed Virgin to continue fixed in prayer, from the morning to the third hour. From the third hour to the ninth she employed herself in manual exercises. At the ninth she again returned to prayer, nor suffered anything to interrupt her devotions till called upon by the angel who attended her, to receive her usual necessary refection : And even then, from his celestial converse, she improved in the love and service of her beloved master. She was ever found the first at the sacred vigils and watches of the temple, the most versed in the knowledge of the divine laws, the most profoundly practiced in true humility, the most ready and harmonious in the Royal Psalmist’s divine canticles, the most illustrious in charity, the most innocently pure, and the most perfect in every virtue. She was immovably constant in goodness, yet was never seen or heard to be morose or peevish at the failings of her companions who were less perfect. Her every word had it in such a singular plenitude of grace, that something divine appeared in all she said. She diligently persevered in prayer, and the study of God’s laws: and ever watched over the conduct of her companions, that none of them might exceed in speech, or break out into inordinate mirth, or disgust each other by pride or offensive behavior. She was ever intent on praising God : and lest the greetings, which neighborly charity obliged her to use towards those of her own station, should in the least diminish the praise due to God, her perpetual form of salutation was ‘Thanks be to God.’ Hence the laudable custom of holy men in saluting each other, to say Thanks be to God. The food administered to her by the hands of the angel served her for her own support : and she bestowed on the poor the portions allotted to her by the priests of the temple. The angel was seen daily conversing with her, and obeying her, as if she was his beloved sister or mother.” Thus far St. Jerome.

In the fourteenth year of her age the Blessed Virgin was espoused to St. Joseph, by divine appointment revealed to her parents, and then she

returned to Nazareth ; concerning which, you may see the particular circumstances in the legend of her birth. Such are the subjects proper to meditate on, which happened before the Incarnation. Consider them well, and take pleasure in the contemplation of them, committing them to your memory with the utmost affection, and practice them with all diligence, as matters of the sublimest devotion. But let us now proceed to the Incarnation.

CHAPTER III

THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST. AND THE ANGELICAL SALUTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

WHEN the fulness of time was come, and the most blessed Trinity had deliberated on the means of providing for the redemption of mankind, by the incarnation of the “WORD ; Christ resolved to take flesh of the Blessed Virgin, through his immense charity with which he loved mankind. His mercy moving him, and paying a particular regard to the instances of the celestial spirits ; when the Blessed Virgin was returned to Nazareth, Almighty God called to him the angel Gabriel, and said to him : “Go to our best beloved daughter, espoused to Joseph, the dearest to us of all our creatures, and tell her that my son delights in her form, and hath chosen her for his mother. Request her to receive him joyfully : for I have decreed to save mankind by her means, and to blot out of my memory the injury they have done me.”

And here, gentle reader, let me once more repeat my former advice : Be mindful and take such notice of what you read, as to render yourself, as it were, present to every passage herein related. But, particularly in this place, fix God before your imagination, in the best manner a corporeal being is capable of conceiving an idea of his incorporeal substance. Conceive him, that is, as a mighty sovereign, seated on his awful throne, the paternal and benign affability of whose majestic countenance spoke in him a disposition towards reconciliation, or rather reconciliation itself : Imagine him, I say, thus disposed to utter the above-mentioned words, while Gabriel, with serene and cheerful aspect, prostrate on his knees, in a devout and reverent

posture, listens attentively to the divine embassy. That received, away the angelic messenger hastens from the celestial regions, and in the borrowed dress of human likeness, quick as thought, presents himself before the holy Virgin Mary, in the inmost recess of her little habitation. Yet not so expeditious was his flight, but that the blessed Trinity, anticipating their ambassador, were in the happy mansion before him.

For this you must take along with you, that though the person of the Son alone was made man, yet the whole sacred Trinity was concerned in his incarnation. The Father and the Holy Ghost cooperating alike in this august and unutterable mystery. Here then, be specially attentive, and as if present to everything that is said and done, endeavor to comprehend every circumstance that passes. Oh, what scope may not this subject afford your meditation. What reflections may you not gather from that little mansion, where such personages are assembled, and such ineffable mysteries wrought by them. For though the sacred Trinity be undoubtedly always everywhere present, yet, in this place, at this juncture, it was present in a more singular and ineffable manner than usual, on account of the supernatural and unspeakable work then and there effected.

The angel Gabriel then arrived at the holy mansion, and entering to the Blessed Virgin, thus the faithful proxy began his message: "Hail, full of grace ! the Lord is with thee : Blessed art thou among women." To which, not a little disturbed, she made no answer. Her disturbance, however, proceeded not from any guilty disorder within her ; neither could it be occasioned by the angelical vision, such kind of visits being, from their frequency, become familiar to her. But, to speak in the words of the Evangelist, "She was disturbed at the angel's speech." That is, perplexed in thought at the novelty of this salutation, so unlike his usual manner of greeting her. Nor could the humble Virgin be other than disturbed at the triple commendation included in his angelical salutation. To hear herself commended, for that she was full of grace, that the Lord was with her, that herself was blessed above the rest of her sex, was more than one so rich in humility could hear without a blush of concern. Her discomposure then was wholly the effect of a virtuous and becoming bashfulness ; accompanied with a fear of too easily giving in to the belief of what she heard. Not that she in the least mistrusted the angel's veracity ; but, because it is ever the faculty of the truly humble to tend to perfection, by examining into and

magnifying their defects, while they either remain wholly insensible of any merit in themselves, or see it through the lessening end of the perspective. Thus, as becomes a prudent, fearful, and modest Virgin, our blessed lady remained silent, returning no answer to the angelical salutation, as if not knowing what to reply. Learn from her example the study and practice of silence : a virtue of the greatest utility to such as are endowed with it. The vice contrary to which is so odious in all, but especially in women, and more in young ones and virgins, that this sacred pattern of modesty could not prevail on herself to make any answer, till she had heard the angel twice utter his mysterious message ; nor even then could she have resolved to break through her wonted silence, but that the sacred messenger, apprized of the cause of her despondency, encouraged her in the following words : “ Fear not, Mary, nor be concerned at the encomiums I render you. Why should your modesty blush to receive the praises justly due to you ? You are not only full of grace yourself, but even born to be the means of restoring all mankind to the grace of God, which they had lost. For behold, you shall conceive, and bring forth the Son of the Most High, who has chosen you to be an instrument of the salvation, destined to all who put their trust in him.” This said, the Blessed Virgin, waving the subject of her praises, was solicitous to know the manner in which this all could be done : which she could not but be anxious about, on account of her virginity, which she was resolved never to part with. Wherefore, she requested the angel to acquaint her with the manner of the conception, in the following words : “ How shall this be effected upon me who have dedicated myself to God by a vow of perpetual virginity ?” “It will be brought about,” replied the angel, “by the singular and ineffable operation of the Holy Ghost, by whose power you will be replenished, and conceive without prejudice to your virginity : and, therefore, will your Son be called the Son of God. For nothing is to him impossible. In proof of which, know that by the same power of God, your kins woman Elizabeth, though old and barren, is now six months gone in her pregnancy of a male child.”

Here imagine yourself in the divine presence, and contemplate how the blessed Trinity, graciously waiting the answer and consent of their beloved daughter, was delighted to behold her graceful decency of behavior, and the modesty of her expressions. With what wisdom and attention does the angel employ his heavenly eloquence to persuade her, and with what sweetness,

reverence, and affability he bends before her as his awful mistress, faithfully executing his embassy, and attentively observing her words, that he may reply to them in a manner becoming her dignity, his office, and the will of the Almighty. And finally, with what a becoming deportment, mixed with graceful bashfulness of countenance, she receives the sudden and surprising message, without being elated by it. She attributes wholly to the divine grace the wonderful encomiums bestowed on her, though such as were never given to any other mortal.

Consider attentively this, and learn from so great a pattern, to behave with modesty and humility : without which, purity itself is of little signification. But to return to our subject.

The Blessed Virgin, after hearing the fore-mentioned words of the angel, with a prudence equal to the rest of her conduct, gave her consent : and, as her revelations declare, kneeling with her hands joined in a devout posture, said : “ Behold the handmaid of the Lord : Be it be done to me according to thy word.” At the same instant the Son of God passed entire into the Virgin’s womb, took flesh of her, and still remained entire in the essence of his Father. However, you may for piety’s sake imagine, that the Son of God, undertaking this laborious embassy of obedience, reclined and recommended himself to the Father, and that in the same instant his soul was created and infused into the womb of his Mother : so that, though he afterwards grew in the womb, as naturally as other children are wont to do, yet he received not like them any increase of faculties in his soul, or diversity in limbs ; being then as perfect God and perfect man, and equally wise and powerful as he is now. But to return to the angel. Gabriel, to accompany the Blessed Virgin in her devotion, kneeled for awhile, and then rising, profoundly bent himself to her in a respectful manner to take his leave, after which he vanished immediately. The Blessed Virgin now alone all in raptures, and more than usually inflamed with the love of God, began to be sensible of her pregnancy. Wherefore, throwing herself again upon her knees, she returned God thanks for so great a favor, and with most humble and fervent supplication, besought him to vouchsafe her the instructions necessary to render her capable of acting her part towards her son, free from any defect; or imperfection.

Meditate then on the greatness of this day’s solemnity. Let your heart rejoice, and the day be crowned with holy mirth : a day hitherto unheard of

since the beginning of time. A day devoted to the honor of God the Father who celebrates the nuptials of his Son, espoused to human nature, which he has inseparably united to himself. A day sacred to the wedding of the Divine Son, and to his entrance into the virginal womb, through which he has to pass into the world. A day solemn to the Holy Ghost, by whose singular and wonderful co-operation the work of the Incarnation was effected : and whose extraordinary benignity this day began to show itself to mankind. A day of glory to our blessed Lady, who on the same was acknowledged and assumed by the Father for a Daughter by the Son for a Mother by the Holy Ghost for a Spouse. A day of rejoicing to the whole heavenly choir, on account of the work of their reparation commencing from it ; but more especially to mankind, on account of their salvation, redemption, and reconciliation ; for on this day properly was the whole human nature exalted and deified.

On this day the Son submitted to the new command of his Father in the work of our salvation. On this day, coming forth from the highest heaven, he exalted Wee a giant to run this race, and entered into the virginal garden of his mother's womb. On this day he was made one of us, and becoming our brother, began to sojourn among us. On this day the true light descended from heaven to expel away our darkness, and disperse the clouds of our ignorance. On this day the bread of life, which enlivens the world, was truly perfected in the sacred tabernacle of the virginal womb, and the word was made flesh to dwell amongst us. Lastly, on this day the long continued cries of the holy patriarchs and prophets were heard, and their fervent desires fully accomplished. They cried aloud, with an inexpressible earnestness, saying: Send forth, Lord, the Lamb, the ruler of the earth. Isa. xvi. Drop dew ye heavens from above, and let the clouds rain the just. Chap. xlv. Would, God, thou wouldst burst the heavens asunder and descend. Chap, xlv. Lord, incline thy heavens and descend. Ps. cxliii. Show us thy face and we shall be saved. Ibid. I xxix. These, with infinite others of like nature, to be seen in Holy Writ, were their repeated instances for the approach of the solemn day, which they so ardently expected. This day gave the first beginning to every joyful solemnity, and is the only true source of all our real happiness. For though hitherto Almighty God has been justly incensed against mankind, for the transgression of their first progenitors, yet from this time his anger against them shall cease at the sight of his only

Son made man for their redemption. Hence is this day so justly styled “the fulness of time;” that is, a time of grace and redemption to man. And hence also may we deem the wonderful greatness of this most solemn and ineffable mystery, where all is profitable and sweet, all is gay and decent, all is pleasing and desirable ; in a word, where all is so sublimely sacred, that it requires our inmost devotion to treat of it, our purest transports to solemnize it, and our profoundest veneration to adore it. Let such then be the heads of your meditation make them the scope of all your pleasure and, choose them for your frequent and favorite amusement. For who knows but the Lord may recompense your pious practice with more ample scenes of heavenly knowledge

CHAPTER IV

OUR BLESSED LADY VISITS HER COUSIN ST. ELIZABETH, IN WHOSE HOUSE THE MAGNIFICAT AND BENEDICTUS ARE COMPOSED

OUR Blessed Lady, having conceived by the Holy Ghost, and the incarnation of the Son of God being fully accomplished in her sacred womb, recalling to mind what the angel had told her, concerning her cousin Elizabeth, she resolved to visit her ; and this, not merely to congratulate her on her happy pregnancy, but rather to assist her at her approaching delivery. Wherefore, in company with her beloved spouse St. Joseph, she immediately set out on her journey, from the little city of Nazareth, towards the house of St. Elizabeth, which was near Jerusalem, and about seventy miles distant from Nazareth. Neither the length of the journey, nor the labors of the way, could deter her from her pious resolution ; but without delay she went on with all speed, that she might not appear long abroad. Nor was she like other women in her condition, in the least burdened by the divine infant she bore in her womb. And now by the way accompany in mind this blessed couple. The ever-glorious Virgin, queen of heaven and earth, with her beloved spouse, proceeds on her journey ; not on a pampered horse, or gilded car, not escorted by a military band of armed soldiers, not triumphant amidst a pompous crowd of nobles, not surrounded with a glittering tribe of courtly damsels. Poverty, humility, modesty, with every graceful virtue, were all their train. The Lord of Hosts, indeed, was her inseparable companion, attended by his glorious court, far outshining all the splendor of the vain and pompous sons of earth.

Come at length to her journey's end, she entered the house of Zachary, and finding there her cousin Elizabeth, saluted her, saying : Hail, my dear cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth vehemently animated by the Holy Ghost, with transports of joy, immediately arose, and tenderly embracing her, cried aloud : Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to visit me? Luke i The words of the salutation were no sooner graciously uttered by our blessed Lady, than they pierced even to the bowels of St. Elizabeth, inflaming both mother and son with the divine Spirit. Nor was the mother inflamed before her son, but he being first replenished himself, replenished also his parent; not operating anything new within her, but rather meriting that something divine should be wrought within her soul, by the operation of the Holy Ghost : Insomuch, that the grace of the Holy Paraclete was more abundantly diffused in him, and he first was sensible of its blessed effects. Thus, as she outwardly perceived the presence of the holy Virgin, he inwardly was affected by the approach of his Lord. Wherefore, he exulted for joy, and she prophesied. Consider hence of how great force and efficacy must the words of the Blessed Virgin be, that the Holy Ghost should deign to communicate himself at the bare utterance of them. For herself was so copiously filled with him, that the same divine spirit in and through her replenished others. The Virgin Mary, after hearing the salutation of Elizabeth, replied thus to her: "My soul doth magnify our Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," with the rest of that divine canticle. Having ended, they both sat down ; when a holy contention arose between them, not occasioned by ceremonious insincerity, but from an inborn humility. The sacred Virgin, greatest in that virtue, as well as in dignity, would have seated herself below Elizabeth, at her feet ; and Elizabeth, conscious of the majesty of her guest, would have placed herself beneath hers. But at length both modestly yielding to each other, they seated themselves together, side by side. The pious debate was succeeded by equally pious greetings, and mutual interrogations concerning the mystery of each other's conception, which they mutually revealed, giving the glory of it to God. and crowning the day with divine praises and thanksgiving for the sovereign and ineffable blessings received. Our Blessed Lady continued with Elizabeth the space of three months, helping and assisting her as far as she was able, with all devotion, humility, and veneration, seeming to forget

the greatness of her own dignity, and that she was the chosen mother of God, and the sovereign queen of the world. Oh, what a heavenly house ; what blessed chambers ! What an immaculate bed was that, which contained such sacred parents, pregnant with such celestial infants ; Mary and Elizabeth, Jesus and John, guarded and attended by those truly great and venerable men, Joseph and Zachary.

When Elizabeth's time was expired, she was happily delivered of a son, whom our Blessed Lady received in her arms, and carefully swathed ; performing with virginal tenderness, the necessary little offices suitable to the occasion. The infant, as if acquainted with the majesty of his sacred nurse, fixed his eyes steadfastly on her, so taken with her beauty, that when she delivered him again to his mother, he still looked towards her as if he could take delight in her alone ; while she, on the other side, continued graciously playing with him, embracing him, and cherishing him with her heavenly lips. What excess of honor was this for St. John ! What pure mortal, besides himself, was ever blessed with such a nurse ! Yet this is not the only great privilege he enjoyed. Many others might be named, were they not foreign to our present purpose.

On the eighth day the child was circumcised and called John. Then was the mouth of Zachary opened, and he prophesied, saying, “ Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, etc.” Thus were the Magnificat and Benedictus, those two sublimely beautiful canticles, composed in this house. In the mean time, while the latter was singing, our blessed Lady, virgin-like, to avoid being gazed on by the men who were present, on account of the ceremony, kept retired in a secret part of the chamber, where unseen she could hear what passed, and there devoutly listened to the prophesies uttered concerning her divine son : carefully and wisely depositing the whole in her heart. At length, taking leave of Elizabeth and Zachary, and giving her blessing to John, she returns to her humble habitation at Nazareth. Here again, devout reader, contemplate her poverty in another shape. She returns home : But to what a home ! To a home unprovided with meat or drink ; a home destitute of every necessary of life. But this would be a trifling circumstance, had she either estate or money, or other means to procure her a cheerful residence there. But, alas ! that she is a stranger to. She has remained now three months with her relations, probably in no mean circumstances : and yet now, not with regret, but cheerfully of her own

accord, she descends to her former state of poverty, and to gain a narrow subsistence with her own hands. Oh ! Christian Soul, compassionate the Blessed Virgin in such great distress ; and learn from so great an example, the poverty of spirit you ought to have.

CHAPTER V

ST. JOSEPH THINKS OF DISMISSING THE BLESSED VIRGIN ; AND GOD SUFFERS HIS BELOVED TO BE AFFLICTED

WHEN our Blessed Lady and her spouse had been some time at home, and Jesus had visibly grown in his mother's womb, St. Joseph could not but perceive the pregnancy of this heavenly parent ; which, with the consciousness of his own purity, stung his soul to the quick with immoderate grief.

If it should seem strange to you that Christ would have his mother espoused, notwithstanding she was to remain always a virgin ; there are three very natural reasons to be assigned. First, that her pregnancy might not subject her to infamy. Secondly, that the care and company of a man might guard her from insults. Thirdly, that the veil of marriage might elude the devil's enquiry into the mystery of the incarnation.

Joseph frequently observed his spouse, but never without grief and confusion ; nor could he help manifesting his concern in the disturbance of his countenance ; often turning his eyes from her as from a criminal, whom he suspected of adultery. Hence, learn how God permits those whom he loves to be afflicted in this life, and how he prepares them for the crown of glory, by means of temptation.

However, amidst his concern he did not lose sight of moderation, but was contriving how to dismiss her privately, without hurt to her person or reputation. Here it maybe truly said, that his praise is in the gospel : it is there said, that "he was a just man:" and great indeed does his virtue appear

on this occasion. For though commonly speaking, the greatest provocation a man has to shame, grief and excess of madness, is the infidelity of his wife ; yet he knew so well how to moderate his passion by virtue, that he would not so much as accuse a wife whom he thought guilty ; but chose patiently to stifle the injury, and rather to conquer by goodness, than overcome by revenge : and, being too just not to desire to separate from a criminal, he was likewise too merciful not to spare the reputation of one, who was to be pitied, if frail.

Nor was our Blessed Lady without her share of tribulation ; she could not but observe his disturbance ; and could not but be disturbed with it herself. Nevertheless, she humbly kept peace, and concealed the gift of God, rather choosing to be reputed a sinner, than to reveal the divine secret, and say that of herself which might be discredited as an empty boast, contrived to palliate a real offense. All her recourse was to God, beseeching him to apply his healing balm of comfort to the troubled souls of herself and spouse. Hence gather what inexpressible grief and anxiety these two blessed personages were in ! But the same Lord who wisely permitted them to be tried, mercifully relieved them both in time of need, sending an angel to Joseph in a dream, to inform him that his spouse had conceived by virtue of the Holy Ghost, and that he should lay aside all thoughts of leaving her ; and ordering him to distrust her no more, but to remain with her in all love, peace, and alacrity. Thus their disquiet ceasing, a sovereign consolation took place in their breasts. And the same would happen to us, if we knew how to arm ourselves with patience in the day of trial For it is a never-failing effect of the divine bounty to calm the breasts of such as behave with courage in the tempest of affliction. Nor ought we in the least to doubt it ; for he is too tender of his elect to suffer them to undergo the least tribulation that does not tend to their advantage.

St. Joseph after this enquired modestly into the particulars of this miraculous conception, which the humble Virgin faithfully related to him : and he remained thenceforward with his blessed spouse with the utmost joy and content. Thus both jointly rejoiced in their common poverty ; he taking the tenderest care of her, and cherishing her with chaste affection ; and she honoring him with modest confidence and spotless love.

In the meantime, Jesus remained enclosed in his mother's womb, like other children, during the space of nine months, patiently and benignly

waiting the due time. Reflect then, and compassionate him who, for your sake, reduced himself to such an abject state of humiliation. How carefully then ought we to study to secure to ourselves the possession of this amiable virtue, and how little does it become us to follow our ambition, and to swell with the vain desire of reputation and fame, when the Lord of Majesty condescended to stoop to so humble a state ! Can we ever make a sufficient acknowledgment to him for this second proof he gives us, in this tedious imprisonment, of the excess of his love for us ; at least, let us make him a cordial acknowledgment of it, and with the utmost fervor of our hearts, return him thanks for having chosen us from among the rest of Christians, to make him the slender retribution of retreating from the vanities of the world, to attend to his service.

It is true, we owe it wholly to the gift of his divine grace, not to any merit of ours ; and yet he is pleased to look upon it as highly acceptable and grateful. Nor ought a Christian's retreat to be deemed a punishment, but a safeguard. For being safely placed within our pious retirement, the impoisoned darts or tempestuous waves of this profligate world, in vain attempt to reach us, unless we rashly expose ourselves to them. Let us then, with all our power, and with the greatest purity of heart, endeavor to enjoy the blessing, by looking up our thoughts, and abstracting our minds from all that is transitory. For it will little avail for the body to be separated from worldly commerce, if the mind or heart remain attached to it.

Learn likewise to compassionate our Lord Jesus for this, that from the moment of his conception to, that of his death, his sufferings were continual, as he knew that his divine Father, whom he infinitely loved, was, and would be dishonored, and the meanest of his creatures preferred to him ; and inasmuch as he saw those unhappy souls, who were created to his own likeness, and whom he compassionately loved, miserably and almost universally plunge themselves into their own damnation. And his affliction and torture were so much greater than his bodily sufferings, as they were the cause of them. For the latter he submitted to, purely to remove the former. What plentiful and rich provisions of spiritual food are here laid before you for contemplation ! Taste them then, and, if you wish to relish perfectly their sweetness, partake of them with frequency, diligence, and devotion.

CHAPTER VI

OF THE NATIVITY OF JESUS CHRIST

THE term then of nine months, from the time of the conception of our blessed Redeemer, being nearly expired, an edict was published by the Emperor, Augustus Caesar, throughout all his dominions, whereby he ordered all his subjects to repair to the respective places of their birth, there to have their names enrolled. In conformity to which, Joseph, being a native of Bethlehem, prepared to go thither : and perceiving that the time drew near for his beloved spouse to bring forth her divine Son, he resolved upon taking her along with him. Here a second time our blessed Lady undertakes a fatiguing journey ; the city of Bethlehem being but five or six miles from Jerusalem, and nearly seventy from Nazareth. All they took with them was an ox and an ass, with which they traveled on in the lowly appearance of such as deal in animals of that kind. At length arrived at the city of Bethlehem, they found there so great a multitude of people, who had resorted thither from all parts, on the same occasion, that, by reason of their extreme poverty and distress, they could find no room in the inn. Here let tenderness excite you to compassion towards the august personage of this young and delicate Virgin. Consider her at the age of fifteen, wearied with the labors of a tedious journey, confused, terrified and abashed amidst a crowded populace : she seeks, to no purpose, a place of rest ; and being everywhere refused admittance for herself and spouse, is at last reduced to seek for a shelter in a homely shed, the usual refuge of persons surprised by sudden storms of rain. In this place, we may suppose St. Joseph, who was by profession a carpenter, might probably have made a land of partition, or small enclosure for themselves, in which he fixed a rack and manger for the convenience of their beasts. And now let me earnestly entreat you to be sedulously attentive to everything that passes, concerning this subject,

chiefly because what I am now going to relate, I had from a devout and holy man of undoubted credit, to whom I believe it was revealed by the Blessed Virgin herself.

The expected hour of the birth of the Son of God being come, on Sunday, towards midnight, the holy Virgin, rising from her seat, went and decently rested herself against a pillar she found there : Joseph in the meantime, sat pensive and sorrowful ; perhaps, because he could not prepare the necessary accommodation for her. But at length, he arose too, and taking what hay he could find in the manger, he diligently spread it at our Lady's feet, and then modestly retired to another part. Then the eternal Son of God, coming forth from his mother's womb, was, without pain to her, transferred in an instant from thence to the humble bed of hay, that was prepared for him at her feet. His holy Mother, hastily stooping down, took him up in her arms, and tenderly embracing him, laid him in her lap ; then through instinct of the Holy Ghost, she began to wash and bathe him with her sacred milk, with which she was most amply supplied from heaven : this done, she took the veil off her head, and wrapping him in it, carefully reposed him in the manger. Here the ox and the ass, kneeling down, and laying their heads over the manger, gently breathed upon him, as if endowed with reason. They were sensible, that through the inclemency of the season, and his poor attire, the blessed infant stood in need of their assistance to warm and cherish him. Then the holy Virgin throwing herself on her knees, adored him, and rendering thanks to God, said : “ My Lord and heavenly Father, I return thee most grateful thanks, that thou vouchsafest of thy bounty to give me thy only Son ; and I praise and worship thee, O eternal God, together with thee, O Son of the living God, and mine.”

Joseph likewise paid him adoration at the same time ; after which he stripped the ass of his saddle, and separating the pillion from it, he placed it near the manger for the Blessed Virgin to sit on : but she seating herself with her face towards the crib, made use of that homely cushion only to lean on. In this posture, the Queen of Heaven remained some time immovable, keeping her eyes and affections steadily fixed on her beloved Son. Thus far from the above-mentioned revelations.

After our blessed Lady had revealed this to her devout votary, she disappeared, and there remained with him an angel of God, who spoke

many great things to her sacred praise : and the same were again related to me, which I am neither capable of repeating nor retaining.

You have here, Christian reader, been present at the sacred birth of the Son of God, and beheld the happy delivery of the Queen of Heaven, and may have discovered in both these mysteries, the true practice of strict poverty, in the extreme penury and want of many things necessary. This most sublime virtue the Lord of heaven and earth first brought to its true luster. This is that evangelical pearl, to obtain which, we must spare no cost, but must purchase it at the expense of all we have. This is the first and sure foundation necessary to support the whole spiritual fabric. For the soul being here clogged with the weight of temporal goods, is thereby rendered incapable of raising itself on high, and freely ascending to God. In relation to this St. Francis thus says: “You are to know, brethren, that poverty is the spiritual way that leads to salvation, as it were, the nutrimental sap of humility, and the source of all perfection : the fruit of which is concealed from and unknown to many. “ It ought then to be a subject of confusion to us, that we endeavor not with all our strength to embrace it, but on the contrary, load ourselves with the care of many superfluous and unnecessary things,” when the Lord of heaven, and the Blessed Virgin his Mother, were with the greatest perfection most strict observers of it. St. Bernard also says, “ The practice of this virtue is a jewel, which the facility of obtaining has rendered of little value in the esteem of mankind. The Son of God being desirous of this virtue, descended from heaven among us, that he might become capable of practicing it himself, and of rendering it dear to us by the esteem he set upon it. Embellish thy heart then as a worthy sanctuary for thy heavenly spouse, with the virtues of a profound humility and a strict poverty. These are the swaddling clothes he takes the greatest delight in, and these he prefers, as the Blessed Virgin testifies, to the mantles of the richest brocades. Adorn thy soul with them, O Christian reader ! and make a sacrifice to God of the vanity of pompous attire, better suiting the pride of heathens, than the humble profession of Christians.” And again in his sermon on the nativity, he says: “Almighty God at length comforts his people. Would you know who are his people? Hear then the man according to God’s own heart : To thy care, says he, the poor is committed. Ps. ix. And as Christ adds in the gospel, Woe unto you that are rich; for you have received here your consolation. Luke ii. And how indeed can they expect

from him any comfort, who have placed their comfort elsewhere? the tender infancy of Jesus Christ is no comfort to the loquacious and evil promoters of idle discourse ; his tears convey no comfortable harmony to those who are inclined to inordinate laughter and trivial mirth. They whose glory it is to shine in gay apparel, receive no comfort from the poverty and meanness of his attire, nor do his humble stall, and homely manger, contribute the least consolation to those, whose ambition is to fill the first seats, and hold the chief dignities in church or state.” The joyful tidings of the eternal light, springing forth, was first carried to the poor shepherds, who were carefully watching their flocks, and it was said, “That unto them a Saviour was born ; that is, unto the poor, the industrious and the laboring ; not unto you, rich, who lulled with ease, and swelled with power and plenty, have here your fill of consolation.” Thus far St. Bernard.

In this same nativity of the Son of God. we may likewise contemplate a most profound humility, which is evidently remarkable, both in the Mother and her blessed Son. They disdained not a stall for their habitation, a truss of hay for their bed, dumb creatures for their companions ; with everything about them that seemed lowly, mean, and contemptible. Each of them, with the greatest perfection, always practiced this virtue, and in the most minute actions of their whole lives strongly recommended it to us. Let us, then, by serious endeavors, apply ourselves to the study of it, and be earnestly solicitous of embracing it because without it there is no salvation. None of all our actions can be pleasing to God, if joined with pride : for, according to St. Augustine, pride was the occasion of that unhappy change among the angelical spirits, transforming them from angels of light into devils ; whereas humility, raising mankind above their nature, transformed them unto the state of angels. Hence St. Bernard asks the following question : “What ought mankind to be, whose happy lot it is to repair the vacant seats of the reprobate angels?” Pride once invaded that heavenly kingdom, it shook its walls, and in a great measure undermined them. What then follows hence, but that a vice so pestiferous is become odious to that city, and the worst of all abominations ? Be assured, brethren, that he who spared not the angels for their pride, will not fail severely to chastise mankind . for he never acts inconsistently, but is perfectly conformable in all his works.

Lastly, contemplate in this divine child and his sacred parent, but more especially in the infant Jesus, that more than ordinary anguish which

piercingly affected their tender hearts. Concerning which St. Bernard again says : “The Son of God being to be born, in whose power it was to choose whatever time he pleased, made choice of that time which was most afflicting to sense and tormenting to flesh ; especially to a tender infant, the son of a poor and distressed mother, who had scarcely clothes where with to cover him, and no better cradle than a manger to lay him in : and notwithstanding the great necessity there was for them, we find no sort of mention made of warm furs, or downy mantles ; and again, Christ, who cannot possibly be mistaken, chose that which was most disagreeable to the flesh. It is a consequence therefore unquestionable, that this in itself is most eligible, most advantageous, and infinitely preferable to all other things ; and whoever should endeavor to persuade, or teach the contrary, ought to be looked upon as no better than a public and dangerous impostor ; and as such to be shunned and avoided by every Christian who places his chief interest in his salvation.” And again, “He,” says the Saint, “was a long time before foretold by the prophet Isaiah to be a child, that should know how to refuse evil and choose good. Isa. vii. It is therefore an evident truth, that the pleasures of the flesh are evil, and afflictions are good ; for this that the eternal wisdom, and the infant word in human flesh, made choice of the latter preferably to the former.” Thus far St. Bernard. Go thou and do the same from so great an example : but with discretion, however, so as not to exceed the bounds of your own station. Much more might be said concerning these virtues, but let us now return to the little mansion of the nativity.

The Son of God being now born, the innumerable multitude of celestial spirits, which were there assisting, paid devout adoration to their God ; and forthwith hastened to the shepherds, about a mile distant from Bethlehem, and related to them the birth of our Lord Jesus, with the time and place, when and where it was effected. Thence, with joyful acclamations, singing canticles of praise and glory, they ascend with all speed the celestial regions, carrying to their fellow-citizens the same joyful news of their Lord’s nativity. Wherefore the whole court of heaven, in raptures of joy at the auspicious things, celebrated the sacred mystery with the utmost solemnity : and due thanks being paid to the Almighty Majesty of God the Father, for the great goodness and omnipotence he had manifested in this work, they all successively, according to the different orders of their

heavenly hierarchy, descend to behold the lovely and gracious countenance of their Lord, their King, and their God ; and devoutly and reverently adoring him, and rendering all due and profound respect to the blessed Virgin Mother ; they filled the air with the sweet and melodious harmony of canticles of praise and thanksgiving to the Almighty. And what one among them, having received the joyful news, could have remained in Heaven, nor descend obsequiously to visit their Lord thus humbled, thus reduced to the lowest condition upon earth ? None of them could be capable of so great an arrogance. And therefore the Apostle says, that when the Father of Heaven ‘brought his first begotten Son into the world, he said, that, all his blessed angels should worship him. Heb. i. This to me is a most pleasing subject of meditation whether it happened exactly as here related or not.

To the angels succeeded the shepherds, who came in their turn to pay their homely, but not less welcome homage ; which done, full of joy, which the devout practice of our known duty inspires, they departed, but not without having first related all that the angels said to them. The blessed parent observed diligently all that was said of her divine infant and kept a pleasing record of it within her own breast. Thou too, O Christian loiterer! throw thyself on thy knees, and in atonement for thy past neglects, most cordially worship the Lord thy God. devoutly greet his holy Mother, and reverently salute the holy and venerable St. Joseph. Then in spirit tenderly kiss the feet of the infant Jesus, humbly extended on a bed of hay ; and earnestly and devoutly request him of our blessed Lady, humbly entreating her to vouchsafe to permit you to take him : receive him into your arms, embrace him with tender affection, attentively contemplate the sweetness of his sacred features, and with the most profound respect salute him often, salute him tenderly, placing all your confidence in his goodness, and all your delight in his conversation. This you may boldly presume to do, though a sinner, because he came into the world to sinners, to work the salvation of sinners ; and after having a long time conversed among sinners with all humility and meekness, he made himself the food of sinners. His divine bounty therefore will readily grant you this favor, as often as your devotion shall lead you to require it. Neither will he deem it an effect of your presumption but a proof of your love ; let not his goodness, however, lessen the fear and reverence with which you ought to approach him ; but reflect that he is the Holy of Holies, and awed by that consideration, treat

him with the respect becoming him. When you have contemplated him sufficiently, restore him again to his Mother, and learn from her how to use him. See with what care, caution, and prudential tenderness she executes her charge, suckles him, nurses him, and performs every other little office as occasion requires. Be mindful often to meditate upon these subjects, take a pleasure and delight in them, and with all the devotion you are master of, endeavor to show your desire of aiding our blessed Lady and her divine infant Jesus ; often gaze on his amiable aspect, on that divine countenance ; which the angels themselves covet to behold, but forget not my former advice to you ; let fear and reverence temper your zeal and devotion, lest you meet with a just repulse ; for your own native poverty and meanness ought to render you unworthy, in your own eyes, the conversation of such, divine and heavenly company.

It might afford us new matter of spiritual joy, were we to contemplate the greatness of this day's solemnity. On this day was born Christ, that is, the Lord's truly anointed. And therefore, this is truly the birthday of the eternal King of Heaven, the Son of the Almighty God. This day, Unto us a child is born, and unto us a Son is given Isa. vi. On this day, the sun of eternal righteousness, which before was eclipsed, spread forth the bright beams of his mercy and grace to the world. On this day the Holy Ghost, head of the chosen people of God's Church, came forth from the inward recess of his sacred bride- chamber, and the fairest in form of the sons of men, graciously unveiled his lovely and long-wished for and pleasing countenance.

On this day was first heard that angelical hymn, Gloria in excelsis Deo, etc. Glory be to God on high, etc. This day, as the church everywhere sings, the heavens distilled honey, and the earth echoes with angelical notes. On this day the humanity and benignity of God our Saviour first appeared among us. On this day God was worshiped in the likeness of sinful flesh. On this day were fulfilled those two wonderful mysteries surpassing all understanding, and to be reached only by faith, to wit, God is born, and a Virgin brings forth a Son. On this day many, almost innumerable, other miracles were wrought. In a word, it was on this day, properly speaking, that all that has been said of the Incarnation, shone forth in its true luster. For whatever was begun before, was not completed nor manifested till now : wherefore, it may not be improper to unite those passages which seemed different in point of time, and to make them the subject of the same devout

meditation. Not without great reason then, you see, is this day a day of public rejoicing, of spiritual mirth, and universal gladness. To confirm which, God was pleased to work the following miracles in the very center of Paganism. At Rome was a celebrated tavern, or house for drinking, known by the title of the Pay house, because thither the Roman soldiers used to resort, to regale themselves, and to spend their pay when they received it; and here, on the same day on which Christ was born, sprung forth a rich fountain of precious oil; and at the same time, a circle round the sun, in appearance like the rainbow, was seen in the Heavens, and visible to the whole universe. And the golden statue which Romulus, the founder of the Roman state, had erected in his palace, and which, according to the Pagan oracles, was not to fall till a virgin should bring forth a son, tumbled down to the ground, and was reduced to dust. All this came to pass on the very day and instant that Christ was born In which place, in honor of the Blessed Virgin, Pope Calistus, in process of time built a church, now called St. Mary's Trans-Tybe"

CHAPTER VII

THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD JESUS

UPON the eighth day after the blessed infant was born he was carried to the temple to be circumcised, according to the law of Moses. Two great mysteries were performed on this day. The first is, that the blessed name, through which only salvation is to be obtained, was this day made manifest to the world ; and our blessed Lord and Saviour publicly called by the name of JESUS ; which name had been given him by his heavenly Father from all eternity, and by the holy angel before he was conceived. And they called his name Jesus ; that is a Saviour. Which name, as the apostle says, Phil, ii., is above all names. For neither is there any other name in Heaven given to men wherein we must be saved. Acts iv. The second is, that on this day our Lord Jesus began to shed his most precious blood for our sakes. So earnest was he to begin early to suffer for us, that he who knew no sin undertook this day to endure the pain of it for us.

Here let tenderness move us to compassionate him : let us shed at least some few tears with him, who on this day shed so many for us. For though upon solemn days we rejoice at our salvation purchased by the mysteries they commemorate ; yet ought we likewise to conceive an inward sorrow and compassion, for the anguish and pain endured by him, who so graciously performed them. We have already seen how many were the afflictions he suffered, together with the great poverty, penury, and distress he underwent at the time of his sacred nativity. But among other things was this, which hitherto has not been related. His blessed Mother when she had reposed him in the manger, having no pillow with which to raise his head, made use for that purpose of a stone, which not unlikely she might cover

with hay. This I had from a devout brother who saw it in spirit ; and the s;mi” stone being now fixed in the wall, is a visible memorial of it. A cushion or a pillow, we may piously imagine, would much rather have been her choice, had she been mistress of one ; but having nothing more proper to answer the end, to the great affliction of her tender heart, she was compelled to make use of that.

We have said before, that on this day he began to shed his sacred blood for us, and that indeed in a most severe manner ; for his tender flesh was cruelly separated with a blunt and edgeless instrument of stone. What pity then ought not this move us to, towards him and his holy Mother ? What tears then did not the tender infant Jesus shed at the incredible pain he suffered in the incision of his sacred flesh ; for his was truly so, and as sensible of pain as that of any pure mortal. And can we reasonably imagine then, that his holy Mother, when she saw her beloved child in tears, could contain herself from them ? No, we may well suppose, that like a compassionate parent, she ever accompanied him in all his afflictions ; so that her tender heart melting now with grief in seeing him cry, she burst forth into tears herself, and wept bitterly. So likewise, may we imagine that more affected with his Mother’s grief than his own, the holy babe, as he lay extended on her lap, waved his little hands towards her lips, her cheeks, and her eyes, as it were to dry up those precious drops, and to request her to forbear shedding them, struggling at the same time, to hide the excess of his own torture to mitigate her’s. But she, alas ! was too sensibly affected with his suffering not to shed tear for tear with him. Yet the divine wisdom within her, supplying the want of speech in him, enabled her to know his pleasure, before he had words to utter it ; hence, perceiving that her grief added to his pain, often would she try to suppress it, and with signs of forced tranquility endeavor to console him ; still often would she sigh, and with forbidden tears, ready to flow from her eyes, and waiting as it were in a state of violence to break forth, thus frequently would she address him with complaints of the most tender love: “Forbear, lovely babe ! forbear those precious tears, or suffer mind to flow. How can thy loving Mother see those dear eyes bedewed and cease to weep?” Hence the blessed infant, in compassion to his holy Mother, would moderate his sobs and give over weeping, and she with a Mother’s tenderness, would wipe his sacred eyes and her own, incline her face to his, closely and tenderly press his blessed

cheeks, and give him suck ; and study meanwhile the most likely means to lull his pain and cherish him. In this manner, she behaved as often as he bewailed himself, which we may reasonably believe he often did after the nature of other children. First, to show the miserable weakness, and wretchedness of man's condition, whose nature he had truly assumed. And, secondly, to conceal himself from the devil, that he might not as yet know him to be God : for this reason, the holy church alluding to him in part of her service, sings : “ The tender infant, as he lies in the cold manger shakes and cries.”

From this time, indeed, the circumcision of the flesh was abolished, and its obligation ceased, baptism being instituted in its place, which is a sacrament of more extensive grace, and less repugnant to nature, as being void of pain. And yet, gentle reader, the practice of spiritual circumcision ought still to remain in force, which consists in divesting ourselves of all that is superfluous, and embracing true poverty of spirit. He, and he only, is in truth spiritually circumcised, who is truly poor. This, says St. Bernard, the apostle teacheth us in few words, Having food and raiment let us be content therewith. 1 Tim. vi. In a word, our spiritual circumcision must appear in all our senses. Let us then show we are indeed spiritually circumcised, by renouncing, as much as our nature will admit of the use of sight, of hearing, of taste, of touch, but above all, our speech. Much talk is a very great vice, odious to God and man, and ever attended with fatal consequences. We must, therefore, show ourselves circumcised in speech : by speaking seldom, and never but to a good purpose : to speak much is a sure sign of levity. On the contrary, silence is a noble virtue, and not without great reason, especially recommended to religious persons. Concerning this subject St. Bernard says, “ He is truly qualified to speak who has first learned to be silent, for silence is the only proper nature of speech.” And again in another place: “It is ever the propensity of weak judgments to be rashly forward in speaking, for the hasty conceptions of a light fancy are always as hastily delivered by an unbridled tongue.” Wherefore says St. Bernard, on the same subject: “Who does not know how greatly man is defiled by the mire dropping from his own tongue : that is, by his idle discourse, by the falsehoods he advances, by slander, by flattery ; in a word, by almost all his conversation chequered with malice and vanity? To restrain all which, he stands in great need of silence ; a virtue

which is, as it were, the sentinel of religious hearts, and their chief safeguard against irreligion and indevotion. So dangerous is too much talk, even to laymen, according to that great Saint. But much more so, if we believe him, is it to the clergy. Hear what he says elsewhere in relation to them, “Idleness,” says he, “ is the mother of idle jests, and consequently a barbarous step-mother to virtue. Innocent jokes are trifles in the mouths of laymen, but all ludicrous discourse is unseemly in the mouths of clergymen. Priests may sometimes take a joke, but should never indecently return it. It is unworthy their dignity to defile, with such kind of discourse, those lips which are dedicated to, and consecrated by the holy gospel which they pronounce.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE EPIPHANY, OR MANIFESTATION OF OUR LORD JESUS

ON this day, which is the twelfth after the nativity, our Lord Jesus vouchsafed to make himself known to the Gentiles, in the person of the three kings. Render yourself present then, pious reader, to every circumstance herein related concerning this holy and solemn festival : for you are to understand, that no other festival in the holy church has such a diversity of service in its antiphons, lessons, responsories, or whatever else belongs to its celebration as this has. Not that it is greater or more excellent than all other festivals, but only that on this day many things both great and wonderful, were wrought by our Lord Jesus, which chiefly regard the state and condition of the church itself.

First, then, the church which is gathered from the Gentiles, was on this day received by Christ Jesus in the person of the three kings. For on the day of his nativity he had manifested himself to the shepherds, as representatives of the Jews, from whom, a small number excepted, he met with no reception. But on this day he appeared again, and made himself known to the Gentiles, by whom he was immediately acknowledged and received, and from them it is that we are descended, who now form the church of God's chosen people. This day, therefore, ought specially to be kept as a most solemn feast in the church of God, and celebrated with great pomp, and with hearts full of joy, by all good and pious Christians.

Secondly, this day, nine and twenty years after his nativity, our Lord Jesus was baptized ; by which mystery he spiritually wedded and truly espoused his holy church, and united it to himself. And therefore on this occasion is joyfully sung: “Hodie ccelesti sponso juncta est ecclesia” etc.

“This day the church is wedded to her heavenly spouse.” For in our baptism, which receives all its efficacy from that of Christ, our souls being cleansed from the stain of sin, and newly clothed with grace, are truly espoused and wedded to him, and the congregation of souls, thus baptized, constitute the church of God’s chosen people.

Thirdly, on the same day, a year after his baptism, he wrought his first miracle at the marriage feast, converting water into wine, which by allegory, may be likewise taken for the spiritual marriage between him and his church. It is probable likewise, that on the like day, our Lord Jesus wrought that other wonderful miracle of multiplying the loaves and fishes. However, the church on this day only celebrates the three first of these mysteries.

Consider hence in what great veneration and esteem this day ought to be held, upon which our Lord Jesus chose to work so many and such ineffable mysteries. The holy church therefore mindful of the many benefits and extraordinary favors conferred upon her this day, by her divine spouse, to show her grateful sense of them, rejoices, sings, and solemnizes the same with praise, thanksgiving, and the utmost magnificence.

But as the solemn institution of this festival was chiefly to commemorate the mystery of the Epiphany, we will on that account proceed to a farther contemplation of it, and defer meditating on the others till we shall treat of them in their proper place, according to the order in which they happened. And even concerning the coming of the three kings to Christ our Saviour, my design here is not to lay before the reader any of those learned comments or moral expositions, which many holy men with great pains and industry have made on this subject ; and on this account, for the manner of/ their coming from the east to Jerusalem, the star which conducted them thither, what passed between them and Herod, or for the matter and meaning of their offerings, and other things of the kind, I refer the reader to the holy gospel and the expositions of learned men on these heads. As I said in the beginning of this work, my intention as well in this, as in all other incidents which occur in the life of Christ, is only to set down some few meditations, according to such devout conceptions as a pious mind is capable of forming, in relation to those things, which either happened in fact or might have happened, according to reasonable conjecture. But it was by no means my purpose to perform the office of an expositor ; first, because I am unequal to the task ; and secondly, it would prove too copious

a subject for one man to comment upon. Be mindful then with redoubled attention, to render yourself present as it were, to every particular here treated. For in this consists the whole force and efficacy of these meditations.

The three kings, therefore, being come to Bethlehem, with a great multitude of people, and a noble retinue, stopped as the star directed them, at the little hut, in which our Lord Jesus was born. The blessed Virgin hearing the tumultuous noise of many people, snatches up her blessed Son Jesus in her arms, and in that moment the three kings entering the little mansion, as soon as they beheld the holy babe Jesus, threw themselves on their knees to adore him. Thus prostrate in a devout and reverent posture they honored him as their king, and worshiped him as their God. Reflect how great and lively their faith must be ! What in reality did then appear that could excite them to believe, that a poor, tender infant, in the arms of as poor a mother, dejected, meanly clothed, in a despicable cottage without furniture, without company, without attendants, could be really a king, could be truly their God ? And yet such was their faith, that they believed both, in spite of all that their senses had to offer in opposition. Such were the guides, such the first leaders which heaven thought proper to give us, and such the great originals it behooves us to copy. After they had devoutly paid this homage to our blessed Redeemer, and duly honored his holy mother, remaining still on their bended knees before him, we may piously imagine that they now began to discourse with the holy Virgin, and to ask many questions concerning her beloved Son, which they might do, either by the help of an interpreter, or by themselves, since they were men of great wisdom and learning, they were probably sufficiently versed in the Hebrew language. They therefore submissively request her to acquaint them with the particular circumstances relating to the holy babe and herself. The Blessed Virgin relates to them, and they readily believe all that she tells them. Observe reverently, with what awe they address and listen to her by turns. Mark too with what graceful majesty, mixed with a becoming modesty, the sacred Queen of Virgins returns the necessary replies ; neither forward to talk, nor desirous to be seen. Yet God on this occasion endowed her with more than usual resolution to support her dignity in the presence of these prince]y votaries, as they represented the whole church, which he afterwards was to establish, and did establish. Here again contemplate our

Lord Jesus, who not yet pleased to speak, with benign and pleasant aspect, fixed his eyes upon them, and with gravity becoming his full maturity of judgment, attentively observes them, full well understanding all that passes. And what pleasure must not these admiring princes conceive, in beholding him, the fairest and the most beautiful among the children of men ! And to behold him not merely with the eyes of the body, but with a kind of mental intuition, as men inwardly taught and enlightened by the object they gazed on. Thus replenished with joy and consolation, at length, they made their offerings to him in the following manner: Opening their coffers and spreading a carpet at the feet of our Lord Jesus, they humbly kneeled down before him, and laying their treasures at his feet, devoutly offered him the precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh in great abundance, but more especially of gold. We may reasonably suppose that the gifts of these three kings were both great and rich, and that the gold might exceed all the rest in quantity and bulk ; for had their offerings been but small and of little value, it would have been a needless trouble for them to have opened their treasures, as the gospel says they did, when their servants, who were near at hand, might have helped them to what they wanted, more readily, and with less trouble opened their treasures, as the gospel says they did, when their servants, who were near at hand, might have helped them to what they wanted, more readily, and with less trouble.

When they had completed their offerings and laid their precious treasures before him, they reverently prostrated themselves and devoutly kissed his sacred feet. And why may not we piously imagine that the blessed infant, full of divine wisdom, the more to comfort them, and settle their affections on him, tendered them his divine little hand to kiss, and blessed them with it ? After this they submissively inclined to our blessed Lady, and taking leave of her and St. Joseph, with hearts full of joy and comfort, they returned again, as the gospel says, into their native country by another way.

But what, may we imagine, did the Blessed Virgin do with those gifts, or how can we suppose she employed so great a quantity of gold and other valuable presents ? Did she, think you, hoard them up for her own or her divine Son's use ? Did she lay them out in the purchase of lands or houses ? No, she was too much in love herself with virtuous poverty, and knew too well the will of her blessed infant, for their inward communication of souls, as well as every little outward gesture, left her no room to doubt of his

contempt of riches. What use then could she make of them ? What use? The best and only virtuous use that can be made of earthly riches. In a word, she distributed them in a few days to the poor: of so little estimation, nay, so burdensome and offensive in the sight of Christ and his Mother, are the treasures of this world and the pride of kings ! Nay, our blessed Lady so entirely disposed of the whole, that at her entrance after into the temple, to present her child, she had not wherewith to purchase a lamb for his ransom, as the law directed, but offered a pair of turtle-doves for him, the usual offering of the poor. Thus is it consonant with reason, both to admire the magnificent devotion of the wise men in the nobleness of their offerings, and to adore the exalted charity and love of poverty of the Queen of Heaven, in her distribution of them to the indigent. You have here, gentle reader, before your eyes, the truest and best commendation that can be given to poverty : concerning which, two things are especially worthy your observation. First, Christ our Saviour, and his holy Mother, disdained not to receive alms, like necessitous persons. Secondly, they were so far from being solicitous to attain riches, or anxious to hoard them, that they would not so much as keep what was liberally bestowed upon them, increasing daily in the love and desire of poverty.

But have you yet reflected on the profound humility that appears in them on this occasion ? Surely, if you recollect, you cannot but perceive a most perfect example of it. We daily meet with many, who, in their own eyes, are very mean, and not raised by any opinion of merit they experience in themselves, yet are wholly unwilling to appear such in the eyes of others, and cannot easily bear to be contemned by any, to have their faults disclosed, or that the meanness of their condition should be made public, lest it might draw upon them the scorn and derision of the world. But this is not the example which our Lord Jesus gives them this day, who, though the supreme Lord and Master of all things, would have his poverty exposed to all, and his low condition appear openly to others ; and this not to a few only, or to such as were poor and distressed like himself, but even to numbers of rich and noble personages, to princes, and kings, and to their numerous retinue. Nay, and this at a time of no little danger. For they who came from such remote countries in search of the King of the Jews, whom they believed to be God and Lord of all things, finding him in so poor and humble a condition, might thence have imagined themselves grossly

deluded, and therefore returned home without either faith or devotion. But this hindered not our true lover of humility from giving us so rare an example, that we might learn from him never to neglect the true practice of that virtue under the specious pretext of some fancied good, but that we should learn to be solicitous of appearing contemptible, not only to our own, but even the eyes of others.

CHAPTER IX

THE BLESSED VIRGIN REMAINS AT THE CRIB OF BETHLEHEM TILL THE FULL TERM OF FORTY DAYS IS EXPIRED

AFTER the three kings had made their offerings, and were returning again on their way to their own country, the Holy Virgin, with her Blessed Son Jesus, and the Venerable St. Joseph, her beloved spouse, remained still in the humble stall of Bethlehem, waiting with patience in that poor and little mansion, till the full term of forty days was completed, as the law directed, for purification ; as if she had been full of sin, and denied by her childbearing, as others of her sex are, and the child Jesus only a sinful man and not God, and therefore under an obligation of complying with the strict observance of the law. But because they would enjoy no special prerogatives above others, they voluntarily submitted to the law made for others. This is not the practice of many, who conversing among the rest of mankind, claim to themselves undue titles to certain prerogatives above others, and seek to be singularly distinguished from them, contrary to the dictates of true humility.

Our blessed Lady then, like other women, remained all the while contented, expecting the before-mentioned day on which she was to enter into the temple. During this space of time she was studiously watchful, and diligent in the care of her blessed Son. And oh, most gracious God, how great indeed may we devoutly imagine was her solicitude, and with what attention did she look after him, lest anything should trouble or molest him ! With what caution, mixed with timorous respect, did she officiate about

him whom she knew to be her Lord and sovereign God, never taking him from, or replacing him in the manger, but on her bended knees ?

With what unspeakable pleasure, confidence, and motherly tenderness would she embrace him, often kiss him, and, sweetly pressing, take inexpressible delight in him? How often did she behold, with a kind of innocent and pleasing curiosity, his blessed countenance and graceful form ! How discreetly was she used to bind and swathe his tender limbs ! For as she was profoundly practiced in true humility, so was she also thoroughly instructed in true wisdom. Wherefore she took special care to perform with the greatest diligence every minute office or duty belonging to her charge in regard to him, not only during his infancy, but afterwards. Oh, with what a free and willing mind did she ever give him suck And the pleasure she then conceived in suckling so divine a babe, could not but surpass that of the rest of her sex. St. Bernard says, “ That it is not improbable that St. Joseph often took delight in caressing the infant Jesus, and devoutly cherishing him on his knee.” Let us now accompany in spirit the Blessed Virgin at the manger, and take a pleasure in the pious meditation of our Lord, the infant Jesus, from whom there ever flows a plenitude of divine grace. For every devout and pious soul from Christmas to the Purification, ought with profound respect and joyful transports, at least once a day, mentally to visit our blessed Lady, and to adore her divine Son Jesus on her knee, piously and affectionately meditating on the poverty, humility, and ineffable goodness of both.

CHAPTER X

THE PURIFICATION OF OUR BLESSED LADY, OR CANDLEMAS-DAY

NOW when the fortieth day was come, which was prescribed by the law for purification, the Blessed Virgin with her Son Jesus, and St. Joseph, set out from Bethlehem on their journey to Jerusalem, which was about six miles distant, there to present her blessed child in the temple, as it is written in the law. Let us here accompany the holy travellers on their journey, in devout contemplation, and help the sacred Virgin to bear her lovely charge, the infant Jesus ; and with redoubled earnestness and attention, be inwardly intent, and as it were present, at everything that is said or done, being real subjects of the sublimest devotion.

Thus then do they bring the Lord of the temple to the temple of the Lord. At the entrance thereof, they bought a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons, to offer to God for him, as was the custom of other poor people. But as their circumstances were low, we may rather suppose that their offerings consisted only of two pigeons, which were of a less price than the doves ; and for that reason are mentioned the last in the law. And the holy Evangelist takes no notice here of a lamb, which was the usual offering of the rich. At this time the holy Simeon, who was a man both just and devout, being led by the divine spirit, came into the temple to see Christ the Son of God, whom he had long before desired to behold, and whom the Holy Ghost had promised he should see before his death. Wherefore, coming with speed to the temple, he no sooner beheld the divine babe than he prophetically knew him, and with bended knees adored him in his mother's arms. The holy infant blessed him ; and looking earnestly upon his mother, bent himself forward, making signs to go to him.

The Holy Virgin, full of pleasing surprise, understood his blessed will, gave him immediately to Simeon, who with ecstatic joy and reverence, received him in his arms, arose and blessing God said : Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, Lord, according to thy word in peace, because mine eyes have seen thy salvation, etc., Luke ii. Prophesying many things concerning his sacred passion. And holy Ann, the prophetess, at that instant, likewise coming into the temple, gave thanks to God, adored the child Jesus, and spoke many things relating to him, and the redemption that should be wrought by him to all mankind. These things raising great admiration in the mind of the holy Virgin, she made a sacred record of them, and safely deposited them in her heart. At length, the holy infant stretching forth his arms towards his mother, was again delivered to her. After this they proceed forward towards the altar, in the manner of a procession, which is annually represented on Candlemasday, throughout the whole church, by the blessing of candles. First went the two venerable old men, Joseph and Simeon, hand in hand, with transports of joy and spiritual mirth, repeating and singing : Give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever, etc., Ps. xvii. The Lord is faithful in all his works, etc., Ibid, cxlvii. For this God is our God, without end, he shall be our guide forever. Ibid, xlvii. We have received, Lord, thy mercy in the midst of thy temple. Ibid. These were followed by the sacred Virgin herself, bearing her Blessed Son in her arms, accompanied by the holy widow Ann, the prophetess ; who, full of unspeakable joy, walketh with profound reverence and devotion, close by her side, rendering all praise and thanksgiving to God. These, then, were all that formed this procession, which, though consisting of few persons, represented notwithstanding most great and wonderful mysteries. There were present of every sex and every state, youth, celibacy marriage, and widowhood. Being come to the altar the holy Virgin kneeling down, with profound reverence and devotion, offered her dearest Son to his heavenly Father, saying: “Vouchsafe, O most sovereign Lord, to receive your beloved Son, whom according to the appointment of your divine will, and to fulfill the precepts of your holy law, I here, prostrate, offer unto you as the first-born of his mother. But I beseech your mercy, most gracious Father, to vouchsafe again to restore him to me;” and then rising, she laid him upon the altar. Oh, great God, and most merciful Lord, what a precious and most acceptable offering was this !

It was surely such as had never before been made from the beginning of time, nor ever shall again.

Behold here, and attentively consider how the blessed infant Jesus quietly remains upon the altar, like any other infant, and with serene and pleasing aspect beholding his mother, and the rest who stand about him, humbly waits with patience to see what is farther to be done. Then came forth the priest of the temple, and the sovereign Lord of all things was again redeemed with the low price of five-pence, or five small pieces of coin called shecles, the same sum as it was the custom to pay for poor children. After Joseph had paid them to the priest, the Blessed Virgin joyfully received him again into her arms. Then taking from Joseph the above-mentioned pair of turtles, she kneeled down, and lifting up her eyes devoutly to heaven, offered them, saying: “Oh! eternal Lord, and most gracious Father of Heaven, vouchsafe I beseech you to accept this offering, the first small gift which your beloved Son of his extreme poverty presents unto you !” Then he, stretching forth his hands towards the doves, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, though he said nothing, yet with pleasing countenance gave most expressive signs of offering them together with his mother. And thus she left the birds upon the altar.

Consider here, reader, and diligently contemplate the great dignity and majesty of those who make this offering : that is, the Blessed Virgin mother, and her divine Son, Jesus : and let us imagine whether this little offering, made by such persons, could possibly be rejected by God ? No? rather may we devoutly suppose it to have been carried up to heaven by the hands of angels, and there presented by them, to have been most gratefully accepted by God Almighty, with the loud and earnest jubilees of the whole celestial court.

After the offering was ended, the holy Virgin, with her Son Jesus, and Joseph, departed from the city of Jerusalem, in order to return home again to the little city of Nazareth, their native place of abode. But the sacred Virgin, being desirous once more of seeing St. John before she left those parts, on her way home visited a second time her cousin St. Elizabeth. Go thou with her whithersoever she goes, and in devout meditation assist her in carrying her lovely babe. When our blessed Lady and St. Elizabeth met, they were extremely overjoyed at the sight of each other, but more especially in beholding their blessed Sons, Jesus and John, who, with no

less tokens of joy, lovingly congratulated together ; and St. John, as though conscious of the dignity of his sacred guest, behaved towards Jesus with the utmost submission and respect. When they had rested there some few days, they again prepared for their journey ; and departed thence for Nazareth. And here, devout reader, if from what has already been said, you wish to learn the poverty and humility they practiced, you need only consider the poverty of their offering, the humility in his ransom, and the strict compliance in both with the precepts of God's holy law.

CHAPTER XI

CHRIST'S FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

NOW as the parents of the holy Jesus were proceeding on their journey to Nazareth, unapprehended of the designs of heaven, and of the treacherous machinations of Herod against the life of the divine infant, the angel of God appeared in a dream to Joseph, warning him to retire with the babe and its mother into Egypt ; because that merciless tyrant was bent upon the destruction of the child. Upon this, Joseph immediately rising, ran to awake the blessed Virgin, and informed her of the angel's warning. Shocked to the very soul by this alarm, she suddenly arose, and without a moment's delay, prepared to escape ; resolving to neglect nothing that might contribute to the safety of her beloved Son. They set out with him that very night, by a private way towards Egypt. Here follow them in meditation : behold how they snatch up the sleeping infant : compassionate their distress ; and reap the benefit of the many pious remarks, that may here be made.

And first, consider the many changes our Saviour experienced of prosperity and adversity. And when the like changes shall happen to you, learn to bear them with the manly patience becoming his followers. Whenever you see before you a steep ascent, be not dismayed, for know that the labor of climbing will but enhance the sweets of that repose you are afterwards to enjoy. Thus Christ was no sooner born than he was glorified by the pastors as God ; and yet, how soon after was he circumcised, as if a sinner ? Thus was he honored with the homage, visit, and presents of the eastern monarchs, yet humbled to the association of beasts in a miserable stable, with no other comfort than that of tears, which the meanest child had in common with him. Thus, too, was he solemnly presented in the temple, and extolled by the prophetic predictions of Simeon and Ann, who is now warned by an angel to depart like a fugitive from his native country to

Egypt. Many other instances of the like nature you may find in the life of Christ, from which, with a little virtuous industry, you may reap the greatest benefit and instruction. Learn then to curb the transports of prosperity, by reflecting that they are in general but the forerunners of adversity. Be firm in tribulation in consideration of the tranquility and happiness that are to succeed them. For it is the dispensation of Providence to chequer afflictions with intervals of pleasure, the better to nourish our hope, and preserve us from being borne away by an overwhelming tide of troubles, and to intersperse tribulations amidst our felicity, that we may not be elated by it, but remain always in fear from the consciousness of our miserable condition. All this did our Lord for our instruction, and to conceal himself from Satan. Lose not the benefit of it for want of reflecting thereon.

Secondly, be mindful, that he who enjoys benefits and prosperity from the gift of God, has no right to prefer himself to those who are not blest in the same manner : and such as are less profusely favored with them, ought not to be dejected, or envious, in view of such as are. This, I take occasion to observe from the angelical visit which was paid to Joseph, not to his blessed spouse Mary, though she was so much superior to him. So, when we find St. Joseph, though so eminent in the sight of God, favored but in a dream with an angelical visit which was so much more to be coveted in the full enjoyment of the senses ; we should learn not to be ungrateful to God, for the gifts of his bounty, by murmuring when they are not so extensive as our desires.

Thirdly, consider that it is by the special permission of the Almighty, that the elect are harassed by troubles and persecutions. It was doubtless no small affliction to the parents of Jesus that his life was sought after. For what more terrible nova would be brought to them. It is true, they knew him to be the Son of God ; but that was not sufficient to ward the inferior part from despondency. Why, might they not have said, why, O Lord, since thou art Almighty, should it be necessary to fly with thy Son into Egypt ? Art thou not powerful enough everywhere to preserve us unhurt ? Why should we be reduced to the painful necessity of fleeing from our native land to a distant and unknown country, through rough and dangerous ways 1 Add to this, that the divine infant was in an age too tender, seemingly, for so laborious a journey, being yet but two months old : and his parents unfit for the fatigues as well as dangers of the road ; the one, on account of her being

so young, the other, by reason of his age, and both, for want of necessities to travel with, which their extreme poverty denied them. If these were not matters of excessive affliction, what are? Do you, therefore, when in tribulation, arm yourself with patience, nor expect from your divine master those privileges which he did not reserve for his mother, or himself.

Fourthly, consider his ineffable benignity. How soon and how patiently does he submit to persecution for your sake, and to banishment from his own country; rather choosing meekly to fly from the tyranny than to punish the tyrant : more solicitous to prevent the commission of a crime, than to exercise his vengeance on the criminal. how profound is this patience and humility ! He will neither do injuries nor return them ; and therefore, meekly contents himself with avoiding their consequences ! Thus does it behoove us to behave in regard to such as abuse, ill-treat, or persecute us. Instead of making a like return, instead of loading them with the effects of our vengeance, let us bear them with patience, and endeavor to avoid the rage of their malice ; nay, let us pray for them, and return then) good for evil, after the example which our divine Master has elsewhere set us.

In fine, our Lord submitted to flee from the face of his vassal, his servant, his slave ; nay, from a devil incarnate. In this journey he was borne along by his mother in her tenderest youth, and by St. Joseph, a feeble old man, through a rough, wild, pathless, unfrequented, tedious length of road, to Egypt ; which requires a fortnight for a courier to. perform the journey ; and they, perhaps, were some months in effecting it. For, if we may credit tradition, they crossed that desert in which the children of Israel remained forty years. And what hunger and thirst must they, not have endured before the end of their journey ? For how should such poor and feeble persons be able to carry with them the supply of provisions necessary for so long a journey ? And if they did not, where could they be supplied in so trackless and uninhabited a wilderness ? And where, think you, could they find shelter from the hardness of the ground, and the inclemency of the air, to repose themselves by night, amidst a waste, where houses might seem useless for want of inhabitants? Compassionate, therefore, these illustrious sufferers, who must doubtless have labored under many great and tedious difficulties and hardships, as well in their own persons as in that of the divine babe they carried with them. Accompany them in mind, and share with them, the heavy toil of carrying the blessed infant ; and wish to

alleviate, as much as possible, their excessive fatigues. Grudge not to bear a little affliction and penance for yourselves ; since so much has been borne for you by others, by such great personages ; nay, and so many times. I will not give you, pious reader, any detail of what happened to them on their way to Egypt ; all the idols in the country fell in pieces. They traveled as far as Heliopolis, and there renting a little cottage, dwelt for seven years in that place, in the quality of poor, indigent, homeless strangers.

And here, devout Christian, we enter into an ample and beautiful field for pious and tender meditation: and therefore, attend diligently to the following reflections. Whence, and by what means, could they procure even a homely subsistence for so long a space of time as they remained in this country ? Did they content themselves, think you, with the idle occupation of begging? No? we are informed by several sacred writers, how ingenious as well as industrious our blessed Lady was at sewing and spinning, and that she was extremely assiduous In working for the support of her beloved Son and spouse. They were all constant lovers of poverty from the beginning, and continued so to the end of their immaculate lives.

Now, may we not suppose, that she was reduced to go from house to house to solicit for work ? For how should the neighborhood know either her wants or her inclination to be employed, unless she did so ? And yet, what reluctance must not this pattern of modesty have felt, in being obliged to expose her virginal bashfulness to the loose looks of curious and shameless gazers, by going abroad ! Which, nevertheless, we may conceive she could not avoid doing, without taking her beloved spouse and help mate from his labors, who, no doubt, was busy on his side in earning as much as old age would permit him, to aid his sacred spouse to support the blessed Jesus, till he came to an age to lessen their labor by his own. Indeed, when he came to the age of youth, we may without absurdity believe, that he partook of his mother's blushes, and shared in her labor, by carrying home the work as she finished it, and soliciting for more ; for what other messenger can we suppose she had ? So may we imagine, that often times the frugal Virgin, to buy necessary food for him, was forced to send for the money which remained due to her for work unpaid, or to importune and implore for part of it at least. What humiliation must it not be for the Son of God to be sent on such errands ? What must not her confusion be, to be reduced to send him on it ? And, when the sacred youth carried home the

labors of his parent to such as had employed her, and requested the fruits of her industry from them, might he not often meet with some riotous, abusive, noisy person, who, instead of money, paid him with ill language, and shutting the doors against him, sent him home empty ! How many such insults are not daily practiced towards poor and helpless strangers ! And can we suppose that Christ escaped them, who went thither in search of them ? How often has he come home hungry, as children are wont to be, and, asking his mother for bread, had the mortification to hear her answer him with a sigh, that she had none to give him ! What anguish must she not feel on such occasions ! With what tender words would she try to appease his hunger and console him ! With what redoubled industry would she not labor to procure him the food he called for ‘ And how often has she not defrauded her own mouth, and robbed it of its meal to spare one for him ! These, and such like points, are exceedingly pleasing as well as useful to meditate on, concerning Christ and his blessed mother. I have here paved the way for you to do it. It is now your business to reap the advantage, by extending and pursuing with devotion such pious thoughts as these, in order to become little with the little Jesus. Scorn not therefore to reflect on the most humble and minute circumstances that may be conceived to have attended him, however childish they may appear in the eye of worldlings. For they are most evidently capable of adding force to our devotion, and new warmth to our love, to inflame our affection, to excite our compassion, to confer new purity and simplicity on our manners, to nourish in us a strong desire for poverty and humility, to keep up in us a certain familiarity of practice of the virtues we observe in these divine personages, to create in us a kind of similitude and conformity with them, and finally, to raise and strengthen our hopes of enjoying the fruits of that goodness we so much admire and wish to imitate in them. It is incompatible with our low state to ascend to the sublimity of God. But as St. Paul observes, That which seems foolish to him, is wiser than the greatest human prudence ; and that which seems weak, surpasses all the power of man. Besides, the meditation of these humble subjects seems capable of abating, if not totally destroying our pride, of weakening our ambition, and confounding our vain curiosity. So much good comes from such spiritual employment. See, therefore, and endeavor to become little with the little Jesus, that you may, without

prejudice to humility, grow up and be great in the same measure as he was: follow him whithersoever he goes, and keep your eyes always upon him.

But have you yet reflected enough to gather from what has been said, how painful their poverty must have been, and how mortifying to this modest family ? Had they, think you, the best of anything, anything superfluous, anything curious ? No, this was contrary to a state of poverty ; and, therefore, she who loved poverty so well, would never have consented to possess anything of this kind. Nay, so scrupulous was she of giving way to curiosity, or anything that seemed opposite to poverty or virtuous industry, that she would not at any price, nor for the sake of any one, so much as put her finger to rich, curious, trifling, or unnecessary work. No, she would often say, when such trifles were brought to her, let them work at this who have not their time at heart. And how, indeed, could she, in such a dejected state, afford to idle away so much precious time as is required in the contrivance as well as working of expensive baubles, of no signification even when they are finished ? Though poverty was not the sole motive that kept her from such kind of work : no, had she been less poor than she really was, she would have refused them alike : since such kind of employments, properly speaking, are but a more dangerous kind of idleness, as may appear from many reasons. First, because they are but an expensive method of wasting and misspending time : since all such kinds of labors require many more hours, not to say days and months, to complete them, than they possibly can be worth when finished. Secondly, because they are the causes of vain-glory, in such as work them. O how many fond and self-applauding looks does the worker throw away upon such idle pieces of ingenuity ! That curiously flowered apron, that embroidered mantle, this other trimming so richly woven, so well concerted ! How often, alas, how often does it engross the contriver's thoughts, even when away from it, even at the most sacred occupations ! And when the mind should be employed in studying how to render the soul more pleasing in the sight of God, it has enough to do to contrive, to carry on, to perfect a work of this nature, of no manner of consequence when it is done. This is a weakness the female sex are more particularly guilty of, a weakness so much the more to be lamented in them, as they are insensible, in general, how blameable it is. And yet I make no doubt but that devout sex will soon be convinced of it, if they but seriously reflect on the time they consume, the ill habits they gain, and the mischiefs

they do, and all to tax them selves and others with an unmerited applause. Thirdly, these kinds of labors are improper on account of the pride they occasion in the persons they are done for. Experience shows us, that these thing? are the proper fuel to feed and foment the fire of pride. For, as what is mean and lowly cherishes humility, so what is curious and gaudy nourishes pride and vanity. Fourthly, they are the causes of alienating the soul from God : for St. Gregory very judiciously remarks, “The soul becomes more and more weaned from the divine love, in proportion as its affection for earthly objects increases.” Fifthly, they are unhappy incitements to the concupiscence of the eye, one of the three great origins of sin in the world : for such vain objects can be useful to no other end than to attract the looks of the vain. And yet as often as any one takes delight in idle gazing on such vain and empty trifles, whether she be the worker or the wearer of them, so often she offends God. Sixthly, they are but too often a snare and bane to such as behold them ; who may many ways transgress by barely looking on them ; for example, by taking scandal, by coveting them, by envying the possessors of them, by rash judgments, by silent murmuring, or finally, by open detraction.

Think, therefore, how often, and how many ways God may be offended by such curious trifles, of rather laborious idleness, before they are brought to a conclusion ? And consider whether you, O female reader, and every effeminate worker of such needless curiosities, are not guilty instruments of all those evils ! Wherefore, whoever should persuade you to work for them such kind of things, you ought never to comply with their request, because no authority can justify your consenting to the vanity of others ; and whatever can possibly tend to offend God, is absolutely to be avoided. How much more then are you culpable if, of your own accord, you do it, to ingratiate yourselves, more desirous of rendering yourselves agreeable in the sight of man than of God. Leave, therefore, to worldlings such work as are indeed the proper trappings of the world, but held in aversion by God. It is not indeed astonishing that persons of little solidity and less piety should make such vain amusements their great business of life ; but what cannot be sufficiently wondered at is, that the more devout part, they, who are desirous of attaining to perfect purity of conscience, should defile themselves with such filth, such mere litter ! When it is plain to be seen how many evils are produced from it, of which it is not perhaps the least

dangerous to one, to act so opposite to the spirit of poverty. To conclude in a word, such kind of employments are strong signs of levity, vanity, and inconstancy, in the generality of those who give themselves up to them. Be you, therefore, O spiritual Christian, as apprehensive of such amusements as you would be of playing with the venomous serpent. I would not, however, be thought to condemn all beautiful works of ingenuity. Nothing is more innocent than these pretty productions of fancy, which are designed only for a short relaxation from more intense applications of the mind, but especially such works as are dedicated to the service of God at his altar ; provided they be done without too much affection, delight, or attachment of heart, for that is absolutely to be taken care of. All I mean to decry, are those curious nothings, which tend only to feed vanity, to nourish luxury, to bring poverty to scorn, to enervate devotion, and wean the affections of the soul from the Creator to the creature. Of this kind of curiosities hear what St. Bernard thinks: "Tell me, I beseech you," says he, "what can such vanities avail the body, or what advantage do they bring to the soul ! They are at best, but a poor, empty childish satisfaction." It were hard to invent a severer imprecation on those, who, despising the peaceful enjoyment of pleasant repose, delight in the restlessness of curiosity, than to wish they may be condemned to the possession of whatever they hanker after.

But let us return from this long digression, into which the detestable error of curiosity led me, to contemplate our blessed Lady in Egypt, amidst her labors of sewing, knitting, spinning, etc. Think how diligently, humbly, and patiently she persevered in these exercises, without slackening in the least her motherly care of her divine Son, or the business of her family, still assiduous to her devout exercises of watching and prayer, whenever her necessary occupations permitted her the leisure. Compassionate her, therefore, and at the same time make this useful reflection : that even the Queen of Heaven purchased heaven by violence: and can you then expect to obtain it otherwise ? It is not improbable, however, that some charitable matrons of her neighborhood, witnesses of her great industry and extreme poverty, might now and then send her some small relief, which she submitted to accept with humility and thankfulness. Though it is equally probable that the holy St. Joseph was as industrious as his great age would permit him, to earn a support for his family at the laborious trade of a carpenter. Thus you see what ample objects of compassion rise before you

at every step. Pause here awhile : then, requesting the blessing of the divine Jesus and his parent, take leave of these innocent exiles, who, banished without cause from their native land, are reduced to wander, and earn their bread in a foreign country, by the sweat of their brows.

CHAPTER XII

OUR LORD RETURNS FROM EGYPT

WHEN the Lord had completed his seven years' exile in Egypt, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, and bid him carry back the Youth and his Mother to the land of Israel : for they are now dead who sought the death of the boy. Joseph therefore patiently took the child and his mother, and returned to the country of the Israelites ; but at his arrival upon the borders, hearing that Achelaus, the son of Herod, reigned there, he began to dread going any farther, till again instructed by the angel he retired into Galilee, to the city of Nazareth ; which, according to the martyrology, was much about the same time of the year as the Epiphany.

Here again, you see, as before, how God often sends his revelations, spiritual comforts, and other graces only as it were by halves, and not according to the fulness of our wishes. This may appear from two circumstances. First, from his sending the angel to Joseph, not openly, but in a dream. Secondly, from the angel's not giving him his whole instructions at once, but at two several times. Indeed the gloss says, that God did so, because St. Joseph, and every one blest in the like manner, must be more certain of their vision from a repetition of it. But be that as it may, we ought to set a value upon every the least gift of heaven, and be grateful for it, since we ought to assure ourselves that God disposes everything on his part for our greatest benefit.

But now let us accompany our Saviour on his return from Egypt. Be you, devout reader, very attentive to it ; it is rich in matter of pious meditation. Return then mentally to Egypt, with the pure intention of visiting the child Jesus ; fancy' yourself to find him among other children, with whom he deigns to play for their spiritual good. Imagine that he runs to meet you : for he is all affability, bounty, and courtesy. Fly then to anticipate him, and

throwing yourself on your knees, adore and kiss his sacred feet : then rising, take him into your arms, devoutly embrace him, and dwell a while in this sweet contemplation. Think you hear him say to you : “Welcome hither, devout soul, partake of the joy with, me, of our being again at liberty to return to Israel ; and since you are come hither at so favorable a juncture, stay with me, and join us in our journey.” In consequence of which, express your joy to him, the desire you have of accompanying him always, and everywhere, and the delight you take in conversing with him. Though, as I have already observed to you, these kinds of pious thoughts may, and undoubtedly will, seem childish in the opinion of worldlings ; yet you know that a devout and frequent meditation on them will yield you a more than common consolation, and dispose you to greater and more sublime subjects. After this, fancy yourself led by our divine Saviour to his parents, who graciously receive, and courteously treat you. Throw yourself again on your knees, and, devoutly revering them, remain along with them.

The next morning when they are ready to set out on their journey, imagine you see some of the most respectable matrons of the city, and the wiser part of the men, come to accompany them out of the gates, in acknowledgment of their peaceful, neighborly, and pious manner of living and conversing while among them. For doubtless they had given notice some days beforehand of their departure, that they might not seem to steal away in a clandestine manner, which might have looked suspicious ; now they had not the same reason for doing it as when they fled into Egypt, to preserve the infant Jesus from the hands of a butcher. And now suppose them setting out, holy Joseph, accompanied by the men going before, and our Lady following, attended by the matrons. Do you, therefore, take the blessed infant in your arms, and devoutly carry him before her, for she suffers him not out of her presence.

When they are out of the gates, the holy Joseph dismisses the company, not suffering them to go on any farther ; when one of the wealthiest of them calls the child Jesus, and in compassion to the poverty of his parents, bestows a few pence upon him ; and the rest of the company, after the example of the first, do the same. Compassionate here the confusion of the divine child, who blushing, holds out his little hands to receive what the love of poverty has reduced him to want ; pity likewise his holy parents, who share his confusion with him, and think on the great lesson here set

you, when you see him who made the earth, and all that is in it, make choice of so rigorous a poverty, and so penurious a life, for his blessed parents and himself. What luster does not the virtue of poverty receive from their practice ! And how can we behold it in them, without being charmed to the love and imitation of the like perfection ! After returning thanks to their company, and taking their leave, they proceed on their journey. But how, think you, was the infant Jesus able to go through the fatigues of so long a way ? When he went into Egypt, his infancy made it easy for his parents to carry him ; but now too big to be carried, he is yet too little and tender to walk. Possibly indeed some tender-hearted neighbor might bestow on them an ass to carry him on. Yet, O admirable Child ! O delicate Youth ! O Sovereign of heaven and earth ! How soon did you begin, and what labors did you not consent to suffer for our sakes ! Well might these words prophetically apply to you : I am poor, and subject to labors from my youth. What extreme penury ! What endless toil ! What bodily hardships, and rigorous treatment of yourself did you not assume for our sakes ? Should not this very labor of yours we are now meditating on have sufficed to redeem us ? Take then the child Jesus, O devout reader, and in your imagination place him devoutly on the ass, conduct him carefully, and when he is inclined to dismount, receive him joyfully in your arms, and tenderly cherish him, until his blessed mother comes up, who may be supposed to walk slower. Then resign the divine child to her arms, the reception of whom will serve her instead of repose.

Thus they repass the desert they came through, where you may frequently compassionate them on the way, on account of the little rest they receive, though wasted day and night with fatigue. When they reach the utmost skirt of the wilderness, they find there John the Baptist, who already begins to do penance, though privileged from sin. It is said, that that part of Jordan where John baptized, is the same which the children of Israel passed over, when they came through this desert out of Egypt; and that John did penance near the same place. So that it is not improbable that Christ might find him there on his return from Egypt. Fancy then you see him joyfully receiving them : who, after remaining with him awhile, and partaking of his coarse and homely provisions, share with him in return, the sweets of spiritual recreation, and then depart. You, therefore, at meeting and parting, omit not to pay your reverence to the Saint, but throw yourself at his feet, and

devoutly kissing them, recommend yourself to the intercession of this youth, excellent and wonderful in every circumstance of his life. He was the first hermit, the founder and pattern of all who make choice of a religious and solitary life : he was an unspotted virgin, an excellent preacher, more than a prophet, and a glorious martyr. After parting from John, the blessed travelers cross over Jordan, and call at the house of Elizabeth, where they pass some time in mutual congratulations, spiritual joy, and celestial mirth. Here Joseph being informed that Archelaus reigned in Judea, and admonished in a dream by an angel, they retired to the city of Nazareth in Galilee.

And now we have brought back the child Jesus out of Egypt, at whose return, the sisters, and other relations and friends of our blessed Lady, came to congratulate with them in Nazareth, where they remained and pursued their usual love of poverty. From this time, to the twelfth year of his age, nothing remarkable is recorded of the blessed Jesus. It is said, however, and it is not improbable, that the fountain is still to be seen there, out of which he used to draw water for his mother. For our truly humble Lord often did such humble offices for her, as she had no one else to do them. Here, too, we may suppose, that St. John the Evangelist, who was then about five years old, often came to visit our Lord, accompanied by his mother, who was sister to the Blessed Virgin. For it is written of him, that he died sixty-seven years after our Lord's passion, in the ninety-eighth year of his age ; so that at the time of Christ's suffering, which was when he was something turned of thirty- three years old, St. John was thirty-one ; and consequently, the one being seven years old at his return from Egypt, the other must be five. Imagine then, you see these holy children conversing together, and contemplate their conversation in such a manner as the Holy Ghost shall vouchsafe to inspire. What will greatly help your contemplation is, to reflect that this John was afterwards that disciple whom Christ loved the most, and conversed the most familiarly with.

CHAPTER XIII

OUR LORD JESUS REMAINS IN JERUSALEM

WHEN our Lord was twelve years old he went up with his parents to Jerusalem, according to the law and custom of the festival, which lasted eight days. Again, then, the divine Jesus undertakes the labor of a long journey, to honor his heavenly Father on the days consecrated to him ; for infinite was the love between the Father and Son. But the joy, which the external pomp and honor paid to his Father gave the holy Jesus, fell greatly short of the affliction and bitter anguish of heart he felt on account of the many crimes by which sinners dishonored him. Thus then was the Lord of the law observant of the law ; and thus humbly did the Creator of the greatest mingle with the least of his creatures. When the octave was ended, his parents returning home, he remained in Jerusalem. Here, pious reader, be attentive and render yourself present to everything that passes ; you will find the subject equally devout and profitable. I have already told you, that Nazareth, the place of Christ's abode, is about fifteen miles distant from Jerusalem. When, therefore, in the evening, our blessed Lady and St. Joseph, who had taken different roads, met at the inn where they were to put up for that night, the Virgin not seeing the child with her spouse, in whose company she expected him to return, immediately asks him: "Where is the child Jesus?" To whom he answers with equal surprise and concern, "Is he not with you ? Alas ! I thought he returned in your company ; he came not with me, neither know I what is become of him." Shocked at this unexpected, and unlocked for reply, the frightened mother bursting into a flood of tears, cries : "No, ah, no, he came not with me. Alas, alas ! Is this the care I should have taken of my child ? Is all my tenderness come to

this?" Then rushing; forth distracted with anxiety, she runs from house to house, with all the composure so much grief was capable of: "Tell me, oh ! neighbors, tell me, have ye seen my son ? Where is my child ? For pity's sake, who has my child ? Ah, dearest Jesus ! Where are you ? What is come of you, my dear, my only child ?" Thus ran the anxious Virgin from place to place, distracted and lost to comfort amidst her grief and care ; the blessed Joseph in tears everywhere followed to console her. But what consolation could either of them receive when they found not the divine Jesus ? What must their sorrow be, especially hers, whose tenderness must be greater ! What could avail the comfort their neighbors, their friends, their relations endeavored to give them? Can aught compensate for the loss of Jesus? Do you, therefore, condole with this blessed couple, whose afflictions must be greater than tongue can express. For which of all the troubles they ever suffered could equal this ? Let us not then be discontented, when trouble visits us, since Jesus thought not fit to spare his parents. It is his divine permission that afflictions should come, they are so many proofs of his love to us, and are calculated for our benefit.

The blessed Virgin finding all her searches to no purpose, retires sorrowful to her chamber, and throwing herself on her knees, with tears of humility mixed with confidence, she thus addressed herself to God, her constant refuge and holy comfort : " O God, my Father, my eternal Lord, my all-sweet and benign benefactor I You vouchsafed to bestow your beloved Son upon me, and I, alas, have lost him ; nor know I where to seek him. Restore him to me again ; oh I restore him to me ! Remove, O Father, this bitter heaviness from me, and show me your Son ! I have acted incautiously, but I knew not that I did so. Look not therefore on my negligence, but on the excess of my affliction ; and, out of your immense goodness, give me back my Son, without whom life would be a death to me. Oh ! where are you, my dearest Son ? What is come of you? Who enjoys the blessing of cherishing you in my stead . Are you returned to heaven to your Divine Father? For I know you are the Son of God, and God yourself ! Why then did you not acquaint me with your departure, that I might once more have embraced you in these arms, and pressed these lips to your divine mouth before I lost you ? Or rather, has not some insidious mortal laid a snare for you For I know you are truly man, begotten of this flesh of mine. Too well I remember the hurrying you away to Egypt in your

tenderest infancy, to preserve you from the rage of Herod. And too much, too much I dread, you are fallen into the hands of such an other tyrant. But, oh, may your heavenly Father preserve you from every harm, my[^] dearest child ! Return, oh dearest Jesus, to your afflicted mother ; or let me know but where you are, and I will come to you ! Forgive this one neglect, and I will never neglect you more. When did I ever offend you, that you should leave me thus I know you are not unacquainted with the grief that overwhelms me ; oh, ease me then, my dearest Son, and delay not returning to me. Did I, ever since I have borne you, eat, sleep, or live without you before? And now I am without you without knowing how. You know you are all my hope, my life, my joy, and that I cannot subsist without you. Instruct me then, where you are, or how I may find you.”

With these and such like ejaculations, the holy mother of Christ soothed her sorrow till the next morning, when, by break of day, they went forth seeking him round all the neighboring villages ; for there were many ways from Jerusalem to the place where they then were. Not finding him this day, they went the next in search of him to other places, and along other ways, enquiring among all their friends and relations: and now, not finding him. The afflicted mother redoubles her fears and anxiety. But the third day returning to Jerusalem, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors. No sooner did the blessed Virgin cast her eyes on the beloved child, than, transported with a sudden and inexpressible joy, she throws herself on her knees, and with tears of consolation, returns her sincerest thanks to God. The divine youth, seeing his mother, came up to her, who immediately clasping him in her arms, pressed, embraced, and sweetly fondled him. Now she tenderly prints her kisses on his cheeks, and holding him at her bosom, stands immovable, unable, as yet, through an excess of tender transport, to speak to him : till the desire of possessing him again in safety, stopped the overflow of joy, and gave her words a vent. Then, looking wishfully on him, “Why, ah, why, my dearest, Child, have you used us thus? With what grief have not I and your Father been seeking you!” “Why,” said he, “ did you seek me? Know you not that it behooves me to attend to my Father’s business?” But this they did not understand the meaning of. The joyful mother immediately informs her Son of her desire to return to Nazareth. “My Son,” said she, “ it is my desire that we go back to our peaceful home : and will you not console me with your company

thither?” “ Yes, O beloved parent,” replies this pattern of obedience, “your pleasure shall be mine.” And what he said he performed, returning with his parents to Nazareth, submitting wholly to their will in all things, as other children ought to do.

You have beheld then the affliction of the blessed mother on this occasion ; and now consider the hardships of her divine Son, during these three days. Imagine then you see him at the door of some poor man craving admittance, where he is received, and sparingly helped to food. Thus the poor child Jesus delights to associate with the poor. Next consider him sitting amidst the doctors : where, with a serene, wise, and respectful countenance, he questions them as if he were ignorant of the things he asks : all which he does partly out of humility, partly not to confound them with the miraculous readiness of his solutions.

Here, likewise, you may consider three very remarkable truths. The first is, that whoever wishes to be united to God, must not be attached to parents, friends, or relations, but renounce them. For Christ, when he was intent upon the affairs of his heavenly Father, forsook his beloved mother, and was not to be found among any of his relations. The second is, that no one who leads a spiritual life, ought to wonder, if he is sometimes in a sterility of devotion, and seems to be forsaken by God, since the same thing happened even to the mother of God. Let not such persons then be cast down, but seek and endeavor to find him, by persisting in devout meditation and pious works. The third is, that no one should be tenacious of their own will or purpose ; for though our Lord Jesus has said, that it was proper for him to attend to the work of his divine Father, yet he changed his purpose, and followed the inclination of his blessed mother, and accompanied her and her holy spouse to Nazareth ; where he remained, submissive to their will. In this you may likewise admire his profound humility, of which we shall take more notice hereafter.

CHAPTER XIV

OUR LORD'S LIFE FROM THE TWELFTH TO THE THIRTIETH YEAR OF HIS AGE

OUR Lord Jesus, therefore, returned from the temple and from Jerusalem with his parents to Nazareth, and lived under obedience with them till the beginning of his thirtieth year. Nor do we find in sacred scripture any thing he did remarkable during that time. What then shall we admire in him, or conceive him to have done during so great an interval ! For if he did anything worthy admiration, why was it not recorded as well as the rest of his actions ? It seems surprisingly strange ! But take notice here, that his doing nothing wonderful was a kind of miraculous action. For nothing that attends his life is void of mystery. While he was spending his life in practical virtue, he kept silent, seemingly inactive, and abstracted. This sovereign Master then, who was to teach all virtues, and to point out the path of life, began from his youth, by sanctifying in his own person the practice of the virtuous life he came to teach, and that in a private ineffable manner, unheard of before ; that is, appearing in the eyes of the world useless, abject, and simple, as we may devoutly conceive without danger of rashness. Though I do not pretend to affirm anything of this kind, or any other indeed which is not evidently confirmed by the holy scriptures, or the traditions of the Fathers, as I have already declared in the beginning of this work.

Our Saviour then during this space of time, as we may reasonably conjecture, retired, as much as possible, from the company and conversation of men ; spending much time in the synagogue, which was the

Church of that day, where, in the lowest place, he would remain for a long time recollected in fervent prayer to his divine Father. Thence he would return home to his beloved mother and her blessed spouse, whose labor he would often alleviate by his assistance. He would pass and repass amidst the busy world about him, with an air of as little attention to their affairs, as if he did not see mankind : and these would stupidly wonder that so fine a youth should be seen to do nothing worthy their praise. All expected him to make a shining and considerable figure among them. For while he was a boy, he increased equally in age and wisdom in the sight of God and man. But growing up from his twelfth to his thirtieth year, he was not remarkable for any actions either during his youth or manhood above the common sphere : which occasioned an universal surprise, and drew upon him the derision of the public, who used to call him a useless idiot, an insignificant creature, and a stupid mortal, or by some such opprobrious titles. Neither did he apply to any learning, insomuch that it became a kind of proverb to say, that he was but an old minor. Such a life did he lead and persist in, though it brought him into contempt with all men, who looked upon him as mean and contemptible, which he previously foretold of himself by the mouth of his prophet, saying, I am a worm, and not a man.

You see then, how much our Lord did, though seeming to do nothing ; he rendered himself mean and despicable to all, as I have already said. And certainly I know no greater or more difficult practice in all the duties of life than this. And they, in my opinion, may be said to have reached the very summit of Christian perfection, who are so far advanced in it as to be able totally to overcome the arrogance of their flesh, and truly and unfeignedly to consent to be reputed as nothing, and even contemned as mean and insignificant. A victory over one's self of this nature is greater and more glorious than the sacking a strongly -garrisoned town, according to the words of Solomon. "The patient man is better than the strong one, and he that conquers his spirit than the conquerors of a city." Prov. xvi. Until you arrive to this point, never flatter yourself with having done anything. For, as in reality we are but use less, even when we have done our best, according to the words of Christ, till we attain to this degree of humility, we are nothing at all, but a vain and empty mass ; which the Apostle very plainly expresses, "Whoever thinks himself to be. Something, being really nothing, deceives himself." Gal. vi. If you ask why our Lord practiced this, I shall

answer you, that it was not on his own account, but for your instruction. And therefore, Christian, if you do not profit from so great a lesson, you become inexcusable. For it is an abomination to see a worm, and the destined food for worms, strutting with arrogance, and vainly raising himself, when the Lord of Majesty deigns to stoop to so abject a degree of humiliation.

If any one should deem it an absurdity to believe that our Lord Jesus led for so long a time such a life of seeming inactivity as here mentioned, and is rather disposed to think the evangelists defective in the accounts they give of him : I answer, in the first place, that the example of so much and such great virtue, cannot properly be called a state of inactivity ; since it was the most useful lesson he could give us, as being, properly speaking, the foundation of all virtue. Secondly, it is written in the Gospel of St. John, “ When the comforter shall come, the Spirit of Truth whom I send to you from the Father, who proceeds from the Father, he will give testimony of me, and ye shall give testimony of me, because you are with me (that is, in the quality of preachers) from the beginning.” John XT. And Peter says, at the election of St. Matthias the Apostle, “ It is proper out of these men, etc., from the time of our Lord Jesus entering in among us, beginning from the baptism of John, etc.” Acts i. “ Now he was then beginning about thirty years old.” Luke iii. John then had not been his precursor, had Jesus suffered them to preach sooner. Besides, if he or they had begun their mission sooner, how comes it that he was then so little among his neighbors, that they should enquire, “ Is not this the carpenter’s son?” Matt. xiii. When, in a very short time after, he was commonly called the Son of David. If then he had begun sooner to do anything remarkable, something of it, at least, would have been hinted in holy scripture, and all the evangelists would not have been so profoundly silent about him. This seems to be the opinion of St. Bernard, as I shall hereafter quote him. But however the truth of it may be, I cannot but think it a very pious matter for meditation. It is thus the Lord Jesus forms the sword of humility, as the prophet foretold him: “ Gird on thy sword upon thy loins, O thou most powerful !” Psal xliv. And with what sword was it more proper to conquer the infernal prince of pride, than with that of humility ? For we nowhere read of his having engaged him with the weapons of his greatness, but the opposite ones, even at the time of his passion, when he seemed to stand in

need of all his immensity. Hence the same prophet bemoans him to his heavenly Father, saying, “ You have averted from him the help of his sword, and have not assisted in the battle.” Ps. lxxxviii. You see then, Christian reader, how our Lord “began first how to do, and then to teach.” Acts i. Designing one day to invite you to the imitation of him, with those ineffable words, * ‘ Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart.” Matt. xi. This then was the virtue he first chose to practise ; and that not in outward show only, but from the inmost recesses of his heart, for he was truly meek and humble of heart. He was incapable of fiction, and therefore readily humbled himself to seem and be mean and abject in the eyes of men ; insomuch that even after he began to preach his sublime and heavenly doctrine, and confirmed it with miracles, their contempt of him continued, and they would often say of him in derision, “ Who is this ? Is not this the carpenter’s son?” Matt. xiii., with other like scornful expressions. According to this sense then, it appears how truly the apostle said, “He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.” Philip ii. And not only of a servant, in one sense, by taking human flesh, but in the lowest sense of the word, that is, he took the form of a useless servant, by the lowliness and abject manner of his living. ‘

Would you see how powerfully our Lord put on this sword ? Consider his every action, and you will find humility shining in all its lustre. Do but recollect, and you will find it in every action hitherto taken notice of. And in those which follow, you may observe, that he was so far from neglecting the practice of it, that he increases in humility during his whole life, giving us frequent lessons of it to the hour of his death, and even after death, nay, after his ascension. Did not he towards his end wash his disciples’ feet ? Was he not extremely humbled by the cross he bore on his divine shoulders ? Did he not, after his resurrection, when in a glorified state, call his disciples, brethren? “Go,” says he to Mary Magdalen, “and tell my brethren, etc.” John xx. And even after his ascension, did he not converse familiarly with Paul, and as humbly as if he had been his equal ? “ Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?” Acts ix. Where he does not call himself God, but me. And finally at the great and tremendous day of judgment, will he not, from his majestic and awful tribunal, say, “ As long as ye have done it to one of the least of my brethren, you have done it to me.” Matt. xxv. It was not without reason our Saviour showed such a love for humility. He knew

that as pride is the foundation of all siri, so humility is the basis of every virtue, and the first step to salvation. It is but a tottering edifice that is not built upon the groundwork of humility. Wherefore, twist not to your chastity, to your poverty, or any other virtue you are possessed of, unless it be accompanied with, and supported by humility. It was Christ then that first laid this foundation, and showed how it is to be acquired, namely, by vilifying and lowering himself in his own esteem, and in the opinion of all the world, and by the uninterrupted exercise of self humiliation. Go you, then, O attentive Christian, and do the like, if you would be perfectly humble, as becomes a Christian ; for humility, self-con tempt, and the practice of lowly and vilifying work, must precede all other virtues. In relation to which, thus says St. Bernard: "Humility, which is obtained by humiliation is the basis of all spiritual structures. For humiliation is as truly the way to humility, as patience is to peace, or reading to knowledge. If you thirst after humility, be not averse to humiliation. For if you cannot stoop to humiliation, you will never be able to rise to humility." And in another place: "Whoever means to raise himself above himself, must set out by thinking meanly of himself : lest, soaring above his sphere, he fall beneath it, for want of being perfectly grounded in humility. And, as there is no becoming in reality great, but by the merit of endeavoring to be little, therefore, whoever is desirous of rising to perfection, must restrain himself by humility, that humility may raise him." Wherefore, gentle reader, when you see yourself humbled, rejoice at it ; it is a good sign, and an argument of approaching grace. "For as the heart is exalted before a fall, so before exaltation it is humbled." Prov. xvi. For it is alike written, that " God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble." Jam. iv. And a little farther he adds, " It is doing but little to submit to the humiliations which come immediately from God, unless we learn to accept cheerfully those he is pleased to send us by the means of his creatures." Learn an admirable example of this from holy David, who, being cursed by a servant, was too much animated with grace to be moved with resentment of the injury. " What is there," says he, " between me and you, oh Sons of Servai." 4 Kings xiv. Oh, true man according to God's own heart, not moved to indignation or anger, by the scornful reproaches of a slave ! Well might he say with a safe conscience, "If I return evil to those that did evil to me."Ps.vii. Let this much suffice, at present, on the virtue humility.

Now let us return to the life and actions of Christ, which is and ought to be the mirror of ours, and the principle object of our intention. Be present then, as I have often exhorted you, to all that relates to him. And contemplate that blessed family, small indeed in number, but great in dignity, rich in grace and virtue, but poor and humble in their manner of living. The venerable old man, Joseph, sought with all possible industry, as much employment in his humble profession, as his feeble age would permit him to go through : and our Lady was as diligent at her manual labor, besides (the business of her family, which we may suppose was not little, the preparing of food for her divine Son, her blessed spouse, and self, with other domestic labors arising from this, were all done with her own hands, as she was too poor to have any one to help her. Compassionate her therefore for the laborious life she leads ; compassionate likewise our divine Lord, who shares with both their most laborious occupations, for “ he came to minister, and not to be ministered to,” as he himself says. Matt. xx. Fancy then you see him busied along with his beloved parents, in the most servile work of their little mansion. Devoutly imagine you see these three sacred persons sitting at their frugal meals, not made up of dainties or expensive food, flattering to the palate and inflaming to the passions, but composed of the coarse and homely provisions usual among the poorest people. What sublime, what heavenly conversation passes between them ! No vain, no idle discourse finds admittance there ; but every sentence is holy, full of wisdom, and dictated by the Holy Ghost. O ineffable banquet, where the mind is no less substantially nourished than the body ! After their meals, all retire to prayers-, each to their little separate chambers ; our blessed Lady to hers, St. Joseph to his, and our Saviour to his. Follow our divine Lord in your mind, and view him devoutly persisting in fervent prayer to his heavenly Father. In this little cell, after spending the greatest part of his nights in heavenly contemplation, he reposes the remaining part on the ground, as meanly as the poorest of his creatures. Thus do you each night endeavor to accompany him in your mind. O concealed divinity ! why do you thus afflict that precious, that innocent body so continually, when the fatigue of one such night might suffice to redeem the whole world ? Did the excess of your love urge you to all this ? Such was your ardent zeal for the lost sheep you came to convey to heaven on your divine shoulders ! Must you, King of Kings, eternal God, who supply the wants of all, who afford

all persons of all stations what is requisite for them ; must you, I say, be subject to poverty, meanness, and hardship, watching and fasting, and must every circumstance of your life be at; ended with severity ? What then shall become of those who seek nothing but ease, luxury and vanity ? Surely we did not learn this kind of empty pursuits from this mortified master ! Are we then wiser than he is ? No, he has taught us both by word and by example, humility, poverty, mortification of the flesh, and exercise of the body : let us then improve from the lessons of this sublime teacher, who neither will nor can deceive. And, according to the Apostle's advice, "having food and raiment let us be content with them." Tim. vi. And make such use of them as proper necessity requires ; but not to superfluity ; at the same time, carefully and constantly attending to the spiritual study and exercise of other Christian virtues.

CHAPTER XV

THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

OUR Saviour, after having lived so painful and abject a life until he was completely twenty nine years old, when he entered into his thirtieth year, said to his mother, “The time is now come for me to glorify God and manifest my Father, by appearing in the world, and working the salvation of man, for which he sent me. Be of good heart, therefore, O beloved mother, for I will soon return to you.” Then kneeling to her, as a man and her son, the great master of humility asks and receives her blessing. Then she kneels to him as God, receives his blessing, and tenderly embracing him, with tears, thus addresses him : “Go, my blessed Son, go with the blessing of your divine Father and mine, be mindful of me, and hasten to return to comfort me.” Thus then the blessed Jesus respectfully taking leave of his beloved mother and her venerable spouse, sets out from Nazareth towards Jerusalem by the way of the Jordan, where he found John baptizing. Thus the Lord of the world proceeds alone, for as yet, he had no disciples. View him then attentively, in the presence of God, and see him traveling alone, barefooted, through a long and rugged road, and condole with him. O Lord, whither are you going, and by what ways ? Are you not the Sovereign of all the kings of the earth? Where then, O Lord, are your nobles, your soldiers, your attendants, and equipage? Where are your guards to keep off the populace from approaching too near your sacred person, as other monarchs are wont to have ? Where are the trumpets, the instruments, and royal ensigns? Who goes before to prepare a palace for your reception ? Where are all the honors paid to the royal worms of this world ? Are not the heavens and the earth filled with your glory ? Why then do you proceed

thus inglorious? “Do not a thousand thousand* pay homage to you in your kingdom above, and millions minister to you?” Dan. Vii. Why then do you thus travel alone, a-foot, nay, barefooted? But ah! the cause is plain ; you are not now in your kingdom. “For your kingdom is not of this world.” John xviii. “ You have exanimated yourself, taking the form of a servant. “Phil. ii. “You are become as one of us, a wayfarer a stranger. Ps, xxxviii. Like our fathers, you are become a servant, that we may become kings. You are to conduct us to your own kingdom, putting us in the way that leads thither. Why then, alas, do we go out of it ? Why do we not follow you ? Why do we not humble ourselves, but pursue and delight in vain honors, empty pomp, and passing enjoyments? It must surely be because this is our kingdom, and that we consider ourselves as natives here, and not as pilgrims ; otherwise, why should we be so much taken up here ? O senseless sons of men, why do you embrace the shadow instead of the substance ? Why prefer ye the dubious and transitory to what is certain and lastingly solid? Why so earnest in giving up eternity for what is but temporal ! Ah, it is too true, O Lord, that we forget our being but pilgrims and strangers upon earth, otherwise we should find no difficulty in following you. We should be content with what is merely necessary on the way ; and, without burdening ourselves, or retarding our journey with more, follow you, running on after the sweet scented odor of your perfumes, we should be free from every load, and looking on the transitory things of this life as something behind us, or out of our way, we should neglect and despise them. Thus then our Lord Jesus humbly travels on some days’ journey, till he arrives at the river Jordan.

When he arrived at the Jordan, he there found John baptizing sinners, and a great multitude of people, who were come thither to hear his preaching : for they took him to be Christ. Jesus therefore says to him : “I entreat you to baptize me along with these people.” John looking steadfastly on him, and knowing him in spirit, with fear and reverence answered, “Lord, I myself need to be baptized by you.” “Persist not, John,” replies Christ, “but let it be done as I say ; for it is expedient that I fulfil all justice. Conceal, at present, what you know of me, for my time is not yet come. Baptize me, therefore, for now is a time of humiliation, and therefore will I practise humility in its greatest perfection.”

Be mindful, then, of the practice of humility ; especially as we shall now treat of it with more particularity. The commentary on this place tells us, that there are three degrees in humility. The first is, to be subject to those above us, and not to prefer ourselves to those who are equal to us. The second is, to subject ourselves to our equals, and not to prefer ourselves to our inferiors. The third and most perfect is, to place ourselves beneath and subject ourselves to our inferiors. This is the degree Christ practiced on this occasion, and therefore he fulfilled all humility. You may hence observe how wonderfully Christ advanced in humility, by comparing this with the foregoing chapter. There he contented himself with the appearance of a mean and abject, nay, useless servant ; here he subjects himself to his own servant, depreciates himself, and extols the other. There he humbly conversed with mankind, under the outward appearance of insignificance ; but here his humility is so improved, that he puts on the likeness of a sinner, and is contented to pass for one. For John was preaching penance to, and baptizing sinners, yet our humble Lord Jesus will be baptized in their presence, nay, in company with them. “He came,” says St. Bernard, “amidst a crowd of populace to the baptism of John. And he came as one out of the sinful multitude, who was the only one exempt from sin.” To judge from those about him, who would think him to be the Son of God ? Who would take him for the great Lord of Majesty: How great is his humility on this occasion ? The same humility indeed appeared at his circumcision, when he likewise took on him the likeness of a sinner ; but here it shone forth with greater lustre, in proportion to the greater number of spectators. But was there not room to apprehend, that the appearance of a sinner might prejudice him who intended to preach publicly to sinners? Be that as it may, it was not a motive strong enough to hinder this great master of humility from profoundly humbling himself. It was his pleasure to seek scorn and self-humiliation, by appearing what he was not on purpose to leave us a practical lesson. But what use do we make of that instruction, who, on the contrary, put on the likeness of everything but our real selves, purely to deceive the world, that they may praise and honor us ? If we think we possess any good qualities, how solicitous are we to expose them to the eyes of the world ; and how industrious are we, on the other side, to cover all our defects, though ever so conscious of being sinners ? Where is the humility of this? Is this the use we make of Christ’s instruction ? In relation

to this, hear what St. Bernard says : “ There is a humility produced by charity, which helps to kindle it ; but there is another humility void of all warmth, which is engendered by self-convicting truth. The latter consists in reflection, the former in affection. For if at the light of truth you look seriously on yourself, without flattery or favor, you cannot help being humbled, and appearing contemptible in your own eyes, from this true reflection, though you perhaps are unwilling to appear so in the eyes of others. By these means you will be humble indeed by the operation of truth, but not by the infusion of charity. For were your heart as sincerely humbled as your mind is convinced of your deserving to be so by the light of that truth which has so faithfully given you to yourself, you would, doubtless, be willing that others should discover in you the deformities which self-conviction has shown to yourself. Though it must be owned, that it is neither advisable nor expedient to reveal all that passes within us, and therefore charity and truth jointly forbid us to publish such things of ourselves, as may injure us, or give offense to others. But who can doubt of your disregard for truth, if, captivated by self love, you conceal the truth of your own unworthiness, which you are inwardly convinced of ? You prove it sufficiently, by preferring to that truth your own interest and vain honor.” And afterwards he adds : “If then you are really humble with that true humiliation which truth, the great searcher of hearts, infuses into the soul, add the humility of the will to it, and make a virtue of necessity. For there is no true virtue without the consent of the will ; which will then be effected, if the desire of outward esteem in the eyes of your neighbor be proportioned to the knowledge you have conceived of the inward state of your soul. For otherwise you have reason to apprehend, lest the dreadful reproach of David be justly applied to you. Because he hath done deceitfully in his sight, that his iniquity may be found unto hatred.’ Ps. Xxxv. ‘Divers weights,’ saith Solomon, ‘and divers measures, both are abominable before God.’ Prov. xx. Which means, that having weighed the little value of your own merit, within your own breast, in the balance of equity and truth, you measure it outwardly at a different rate, and impose yourself upon the world for more value than you really are of. But fear God, and let that fear deter you from the guilt of so heinous ;, a crime ; that is, of extolling by an ambitious will, what truth ought to humble within you : for that is opposing truth, and struggling against the will of God. Choose rather to acquiesce

with him, and study that you will be ever subject to truth by a devout and submissive humility. 'For shall not my soul,' saith the royal psalmist, 'be subject to God.' Ps. lxi. Neither is it enough to be subject to God only, unless you are likewise the same to all mankind for God's sake; that is, subject to your superiors, subject to your equals, and subject to your inferiors. In this manner Christ teaches us we must fulfil all justice. Go then to your inferior if you will be perfectly righteous, pay a respect to your inferior, and humbly stoop to those beneath you." Thus far St. Bernard, who says again : "Who is just, but he that is truly humble? For when the Lord of all things would have humbly stooped to his servant, and submitted to be baptized by the hands of St. John : seeing him awed by the Majesty of his Person, Christ spoke thus to him : "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it behooves us to fulfil all righteousness.' Matt. ii. Placing the accomplishment of perfect justice in the perfection of true humility. He therefore that is just, is truly humble ; and this justice in the humble, is plain in this : because, he gives to every one his right ; he robs not another of his property, but gives honor to God and retains abjection for himself." But this will appear more plainly if you will but consider the injustice of the proud and arrogant, who attribute every good gift of God to the rewards of their own merit. In relation to which, St. Bernard again says: "As evil may take its source from the greatest good, when become we make use of the divine gifts as if they were not such, without even making God an acknowledgment for them ; so they who seem to have reached the highest degree of grandeur and greatness, on account of the divine benefits they have received, are in truth excessively little, for want of returning thanks due to their supreme benefactor.

"However, gentle reader, I have spared the weakness of your senses in the softening expressions of great and little. Out of regard to the delicacy of your ears, I have forbore calling things by the real names I think they deserve. I should have said, very wicked and very good. For it is beyond all dispute, that they are so much the deeper in wickedness, who ascribe to themselves the excellencies they may possess. Nothing, in short, can be more criminal. But should any one say, be this crime far from me, since I know it is the grace of God that makes me what I am, and yet, at the same time, studiously aim at self-praise for the grace which he has received ; is not such a person a thief and a robber ? Hear only what he is from the

mouth of truth itself : ‘From thy own mouth will I judge thee, O wicked servant.’ Luke xix. And what in deed can be more execrably wicked than that servant who usurps to himself the praises due to his Lord.” Thus far St. Bernard.

Hence you may see that the perfection of all righteousness consists in true humility, which derogates nothing from God’s honor, nor attributes that to itself, which is not its due; neither does it injure our neighbor. For the truly humble is neither rash in judging him, nor prefers himself to any one ; but rather thinks himself inferior to all man kind, and chooses the lowest place among them. Hence St. Bernard again says: “How dost thou know, O mortal, but that the very man whose flagitious life and infamous conduct you look upon with horror and contempt, deeming him the greatest of reprobates, and infinitely more sinful than yourself, who live, or at least seem to yourself to live, a sober, virtuous, or pious life : how dost thou know, I say, but that very man may become not only better than those or than yourself in his future practices, and be even now, perhaps, dearer in the sight of God than you 1 and therefore how do you know but it may be contrary to the divine pleasure for us to place him beneath ourselves, or to refuse him the first honor among us? ‘Choose thou,’ saith Christ, ‘the lowest place, to wit, that you alone may be the lowest of all, and not only not prefer yourself, but even not presume to compare yourself to any.’ “Thus saith St. Bernard. The virtue of humility is again many ways recommended to us by authentic applauses of the same Saint. “A great mother indeed is humility,” saith he, “and a most sublime virtue, which earns that for us which we are taught not to aspire to, enabling us to attain to the knowledge we cannot learn, and to conceive of and from the holy WORD, sublime mysteries not to be explained by words. And why so ? Not so much on the account of merit, as of the divine pleasure of the eternal Father of the WORD, the Spouse of the soul, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is God, blessed above all things created.” And again: “Humility is a virtue, by which mankind, through a perfect knowledge of his own unworthiness, becomes mean in his own sight.” And in another place: “The virtue of humility alone can repair the crime of a breach of charity : and indeed only that virtue is unaccustomed to vain boasting, a stranger to pride, and not given to contention. For he that is truly humble argues not in judgment, nor dissembles any justice.” And farther, “Humility reconciles us to God, and

pleaseth him greatly when we possess it.” Again: “Humility has ever been a special virtue, intimately annexed to the divine grace. For it is ever customary with holy piety, for the sake of preserving humility, to require that the more we advance in perfection, the less perfect we should think ourselves. For even they, who are advancing to the supreme degree of spirituality, retain still some thing of the imperfections of the lowest, insomuch as they cannot perceive themselves to have attained even the verge of it.

A beautiful composition is humility and virginity. Neither is that soul little pleasing in the sight of God, in which humility is an ornament to virginity, and virginity adorns humility. What praise is she not worthy of in whom fertility exalts humility, and a birth renders sacred virginity ? You have here before you a lesson concerning both the virgin, and the humble : And if you cannot imitate the virginity of the one, imitate at least the humility of the other. Virginity is a laudable virtue, but humility much the more necessary : that is a council ; this, a precept : to that you are invited ; to this you are obliged. Of that, it is said : ‘ He that can take, let him take.’ Matt. xix. But of this, ‘ Unless you become as this little one, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ Ibid, xviii. That, therefore, you are rewarded for ; and this, is expected from you. Wherefore, you may be saved without virginity; but without humility you cannot ; for where virginity is lost, and has no more the power to please, the tears shed for it by humility may effectually do it. And without rashness, I may say, that the virginity of the sacred Virgin herself would not have been pleasing to God, without humility. For, ‘ Upon whom shall my spirit rest,’ saith the Lord, ‘ but upon the humble and serene. Had not then the holy Virgin been humble, the Holy Ghost would not have rested upon her : and had not the divine Spirit overshadowed her, undoubtedly she would not have been pregnant. For how indeed, without him, could she have conceived by him ? It is clear then, that when she conceived by the Holy Ghost, as herself witnesseth, the Lord regarded the humility of his handmaid more than her virginity. Whence it follows beyond dispute, that it is humility which renders virginity acceptable. What reply can the virgin vainly elated make to this ? Our blessed Lady, having as it were, forgotten her virginity, glories only in the abjection of her humility, and you, neglecting this, vainly flatter yourself in the possession of an unavailing virginity. ‘ He beheld,’ saith she, ‘ the

humility of his handmaid.' She ! What she? Truly the holy, the pious, and the devout Virgin. And are you more innocently pure, more fervently devout than she? Or can you presume to think that your chastity is greater or more pleasing to God than hers ? Are you able to please without humility when the Blessed Virgin could not? The more honorable your condition is rendered by the gift of chastity : by so much the more do you injure yourself, as often as you soil that innocence of life, with the mixture of pride. Charity, chastity, and humility, have no beauty in themselves, but only in proportion to the beauty they have in the sight of God.

What is more beautiful than that chastity which renders clean the being conceived from uncleanness, changes enmity into friendship, and men into angels. The angel and the chaste man differ indeed in point of felicity, but not of virtue. For if the chastity of the one be happier, that of the other is stronger. It is chastity alone which in this mortal state, represents a kind of immortality. That alone, which, amidst the nuptial solemnities, imitates the method of that blessed and heavenly region, where they neither marry nor are married, giving us an imperfect relish of the divine and heavenly conversation there enjoyed among the blessed. This frail vessel which here we carry with us, and in which we are in danger, chastity sanctifies, not unlike the sweet scented balsams wherewith dead bodies are embalmed and preserved from corruption. It curbs the senses, restrains the faculties of the body, and preserves the whole man from the contamination and loose desires attending idleness. But whatever beauty may appear from the shining ornament of chastity, this, however, is of no value or merit without charity. Nor ought we to wonder at this. For what good indeed can we receive without it ? Not faith, though we should remove mountains. Not knowledge, though it be that which speaks with the tongues of angels. Not martyrdom, though by it I should deliver up my body, saith St. Paul, to be burnt. Neither without it can we receive any good, nor with it can we reject any though the most minute. Chastity without charity is like a lamp without oil. Extract the oil, and the lamp will not burn. So take away charity, and chastity will not please. In a word, as chastity avails us nothing without charity, so neither the one nor the other avail anything without humility, nor can they truly be called virtues. For it is by humility that we deserve the possession of them both, because to the humble God gives grace. Humility preserves those virtues which we have already acquired ; for the Spirit of

God reposes only upon the humble and peaceful ; it perfects that virtue we are steady in, for virtue is perfected in infirmity, that is, in humility. It conquers pride, that implacable enemy to grace, that source of all iniquity, and rids itself, as well as others, from its insolent tyranny. That alone powerfully resists its malice, and subdues its presumption, being a kind of bulwark and asylum of virtue.” Thus far, gentle reader, have I given you many and beautiful commendations of humility from St. Bernard, that great lover of truth and abjection. Endeavor likewise to comprehend the sublime doctrines he gives relating to other virtues, and practice them ; but now let us return to the baptism of our Lord.

When John beheld, then, that it was the will of our Lord to be baptized by him, he readily submitted and baptized him. And here, pious reader, cast an eye towards him, and attentively behold, how the Lord of Majesty humbly unclothes himself like a mere mortal, and notwithstanding the coldness of the season, descends thus into the frozen river. Through the immense love he bore us he vouchsafed thus to effect our salvation, by instituting the sacrament of baptism, to wash away the guilt of our crimes. By this he truly espoused to himself not only his whole church, but more especially, in a singular and ineffable manner, the souls of the faithful. For by the faith we promise him in our baptism, we are truly wedded to our Lord Jesus, the holy prophet saying in his person : “I will espouse thee to myself in faith.” Hosea ii. Wherefore is this most solemn and ineffable mystery, a work of the greatest service and benefit to mankind ? And therefore the holy church triumphantly sings: “This day the church is united to her heavenly spouse : because Christ in the River Jordan washed away her crimes.”

And in this most excellent work the three divine persons of the most sacred Trinity, in a singular manner, manifested themselves, and descended : “ For the Holy Ghost, as a dove, came and remained upon him, and the voice of the Father was heard saying : This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Matt. iii. “In which place,” saith St. Bernard : “he said, Hear ye him” Wherefore, saith the Saint: “Begin then now to speak, oh, beloved Jesus, since you are now commissioned to speak from your Father himself. How long, oh divine virtue, and wisdom of God, how long, I say, will you lie concealed amidst mankind, and appear only invested with the infirmities of a mere mortal, and insignificant man ? How long, O glorious King, and King of heaven, will you suffer yourself to be called the

carpenter' s son, and even vouchsafe to be thought so ? For the holy evangelist St. Luke witnesseth, that ‘ He was still thought the son of Joseph.’ Luke iii. Oh, humility of Christ ! How greatly dost thou confound the excess of my vanity ; I scarce know anything, and yet flatter myself to know much, and never know when, or how to be silent ; but without shame, being indiscreetly forward, and full of vain boasting, I am quick in talking, ready in teaching, and slow in harkening to others. But when Christ remained silent during so long a space of time, and hid the treasures of his divine wisdom from mankind, was it, think you, because he feared the assaults of vainglory from the empty praises of men. What had he to fear from that who was the true glory of his Father? He feared, however, but his fear was not for himself, but for us ; he was afraid for us, well knowing the room there was for such fear. For us he was careful, us h instructed more by works than by words, and what he afterwards taught us by word he proclaimed by example : ‘ Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart,’ Matt. xi. We hear of very little before concerning the infancy of Jesus Christ, and now to the three-and- thirtieth year of his age, we hear of nothing he either did or said. However, from this time he can no longer remain concealed, being thus publicly declared by his Father.” Thus far St. Bernard. And this is the authority which I adduced in the foregoing chapter, from which you may understand how our Lord Jesus humbly remained silent so long a space of time for our greater spiritual instruction. And you cannot but observe, in the whole series of what has been already said, the true practice of a profound humility, concerning which, I cannot speak to you but with pleasure, it being a most sublime virtue, and what we stand greatly in need of. And is with so much the more study to be sought, and admired with so much the greater affection, by how much the more our Lord in every action of his life was remarkably solicitous of practicing it.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FAST AND TEMPTATIONS OF CHRIST —HE RETURNS TO HIS MOTHER —THE FOUR MEANS TO ATTAIN TO A PERFECT PURITY OF HEART —THE GREAT ADVANTAGES OF PRAYER —THE RESISTANCE TO BE MADE TO GLUTTONY —WHY, AND FOR WHOM GOD WORKS HIS MIRACLES

OUR divine Lord Jesus, immediately after his baptism, retired into the wilderness, to a certain mountain, now known by the name of Quarantain Peak, and there fasted forty whole days and nights, associating, according to St. Mark, with the brutes. Here, then, again contemplate your divine Master : and endeavor to copy from this sublime pattern the many excellent virtues he points out to you in his own practice. To be solitary and retired from the eyes of the world is his greatest ambition ; a rigorous abstinence from food is his daily repast ; prayer and almost uninterrupted watches are his darling exercise ; short and interrupted slumbers, on the hard, cold, bare ground, are his slender repose ; and the humble society of brute beasts is all his company. Though the whole life of Christ will appear to have been one continued series of pain and corporal suffering, yet here it seems to be attended with the most afflicting circumstances ; and therefore deserves a

particular share of your compassion. Pity him, then, and let your pity excite in you a zealous resolution of sharing his hardships, by following the example he here sets you things in this passage are principally to be remarked, which are jointly and mutually conducive to the spiritual exercise of every pious soul : to wit, retirement, fasting, prayer, and mortification of the flesh. And it is chiefly by these that we are to hope to obtain that perfect purity of heart, which cannot be too much coveted, as it includes the possession of every virtue. For purity of heart contains charity, humility, and patience : in a word, an assemblage of every virtuous quality, and an absolute alienation from vice and all its tendencies : because the heart that gives admittance to any one vice, or even suffers in itself the decay of any one virtue, from that moment ceases to be pure. Hence, as we are told in the conferences of the holy fathers of the desert, the whole object of spiritual exercise is, and should be, the acquisition of a perfect purity of heart. For it is by this that every man is to render himself worthy of the beatific vision, as our Lord himself says in the gospel: “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.” Wherefore St. Bernard says, “That he is the nearest to God, whose heart is the most purified.” The natural consequence of which truth is, that to obtain an intimate union with God, we must have a perfect purity of heart.

Now, to obtain this, gentle reader, fervent and assiduous prayer is of the greatest service, as I shall hereafter show you. But what can avail the prayer of one given to gluttony, drunkenness, lasciviousness, and sloth ? Nothing. No ; fasting and mortification of the flesh are absolutely requisite, although prudence be necessary in the practice of both, indiscretion being the bane of every good action.

Neither does retirement seem of less utility. For, amidst noise and tumult, how can prayer be performed with that decency which is proper for it ? And who is the mortal so free from danger that dares give loose to his senses, particularly to seeing and hearing much without offense to his purity or innocence of heart ? “ Death enters by the windows of our eyes to our souls.” And therefore, gentle reader, follow our Lord to his retirement : that is, separate yourself, after his example, from the commerce of the world, and be as retired as your station will permit, if you wish to be united to him, and to enjoy that beatific vision which is the reward of internal cleanness.

Fly the conversation of all, but more especially of worldings ; fly the novelty of friendships, even devout ones ; shut your eyes and ears to all vain and transitory objects ; and fly, in particular, as the most destructive poison to the soul, all that may in the least disturb the peace of your mind and heart. It was not without reason, that the fathers, for their habitations, made choice of deserts, and places remote from all correspondence with mankind, and recommended to all their pupils to be blind, deaf, and dumb to the conversation of the world. “ For, “ as St. Bernard says to this purpose, “if you are desirous of becoming sensible of the sweet emotions of the Holy Ghost ; if you have an effectual eagerness to have your soul wedded to God, according to the prophet, sit down solitary, and you have raised yourself above yourself, by the bare desire of espousing the Lord of angels. In reality, is it not above your native meanness to adhere to God, and to become one spirit with him ? Sit down, therefore, and be solitary as the dove: avoid the crowds, and have no dealings you can avoid with the rest of mankind : forget even your country and the house of your father : and the King shall be desirous of your beauty. Endeavor, then, oh, pious soul, to be alone, that you may keep yourself wholly to him, whom you have wholly chosen to yourself. Retire from the public ; retire from your own family ; retire from your most intimate friends, and even from your necessary attendants. For know that such is the reservedness of your divine Spouse, that he will never indulge you with his company in the presence of others. Withdraw, then, but not so much bodily as mentally. Withdraw, but let it be in intention, in spirit, and with devotion. For Christ your Lord, who is present with you, is so in spirit, and the retirement he expects from you is not so much that of the body as that of the spirit. Though, indeed, it will not be useless for you to retire personally sometimes, if convenience will permit ; especially at the time of prayer, as we shall hereafter observe. You may truly be said to be retired and alone, if your thoughts are not employed on trivial things, if you are not affected by what passes in company, if you condemn what the world prizes, if you are fatigued with what your worldly companions hanker after, if you are insensible to ill-usage, and unmindful of injuries : otherwise, you cannot be truly deemed solitary, however personally alone you may chance to be. You see, then, that it is not impossible to be retired amidst a crowd, or to be amidst a tumult, though alone in a desert. Thus, then, however great be the number of people you

converse with, you may still be alone if you will but refrain from curious searching into their conversation, or rashly setting up for a judge of it.” Thus far St. Bernard. Hence it appears how necessary solitude is, and how fruitless is that of the body, if unaccompanied with that of the mind. However, I must still observe, that corporal retirement is of the greatest service, that the mind may not lose its recollection by exterior objects. Endeavor, therefore, with all due affection and discretion, to imitate, as much as possible, your divine Lord and Spouse, in the great and useful virtues of solitude, prayer, fasting, and corporal mortification.

Learn, likewise, from his associating with dumb creatures, to behave yourself humbly towards all, and to bear with meekness even such as appear to you guilty of misdeeds. To this end, pay often a mental visit to our Lord in his retirement, and observe his manner of conversing there. Every faithful Christian ought to repeat this visit at least once a day, from Twelfth Day to the end of his forty days’ retreat : when, as the Scripture takes notice, he began to be hungry. It was this opportunity Satan laid hold of to approach Mm, and try to find out if he was the Son of God, by tempting him to gluttony. “ If,” says he, “ thou art the Son of God, bid these stones be made bread.” But this artifice could not surprise the Master of all wisdom, who so rejected it, as neither to be affected by the temptation of hunger, nor leave the tempter room to discover what he wished to know ; rebuking him with holy scripture, without asserting or denying himself to be the Son of God. Here let the example of Christ teach you the duty of resisting the passion of gluttony, which is the first victory we ought to begin with, if we mean to gain a complete triumph over sin. The man who is overcome by gluttony, is too weak to cope with any other vice. For, as the commentator upon this passage in St. Matthew says, “He labors in vain to gain a proper dominion over his vicious appetites, who remains a slave to his own belly.”

The devil, not discouraged by this defeat, took our Saviour up to Jerusalem, our divine Lord suffering himself to be carried about by the cruel serpent, who thirsted after his precious blood, as well as after that of his elect, and patiently enduring such rough treatment to set us an example of meekness. Attend, therefore, seriously to the lesson here set you, and profit by it. When Satan had brought our Saviour to Jerusalem, he carried him to the pinnacle of the temple, there to tempt him to vanity; desirous, as before, of discovering whether he was the Son of God or not. But here

again our Saviour frustrated his intentions, contenting himself with confounding the serpent by authority of scripture. So that, according to St. Bernard, "Our Saviour's not manifesting his divinity on these two occasions was a sufficient argument with the infernal enemy to conclude that he was mere man ; and therefore it was, that he ventured a third time to try to shake that steadiness which appeared to him to be purely human." Accordingly, the fiend took him to a high mountain, at a little distance from the above named peak, where, showing him the riches of the world, he endeavored to seduce him to avarice ; but, to his utter confusion, the destroyer was again disappointed and put to flight. See, then, and remember what trials and temptations your divine Lord submitted to, and cease to wonder that you should be tempted also.

Yet think not, pious reader, that these were the only trials he endured. They who reckon but three temptations in the life of Christ must surely be ignorant of scripture, which tells us that "the whole life of man upon earth is one continued temptation." Job vii. And that he endured in the most rigorous manner. For, as St. Paul says, he was tempted in all, by similitude to us, though his temptations were but external ; and. without sin. When he had gained the victory, the angels came and ministered to him. Here be attentive, and devoutly behold our Lord eating, surrounded by the angels who attend him : and endeavor to be present to everything that is here mentioned, the subject being very beautiful, and equally devout.

Here it may be asked, what the angels ministered to our Lord to eat after so long and so rigorous a fast? This the scripture makes no mention of, and therefore we may suppose this victorious banquet to have consisted of anything of which our devotion shall inspire us with an idea. If indeed we consider the greatness of his power, the question is solved ; because, at pleasure, he could have commanded what he pleased out of all that was created ; or might have created afresh whatever he desired. But though he made use of his power in behalf of the multitudes whom he fed twice with a small number of loaves and fishes, yet we nowhere find that he ever exerted it for his own or for his disciples' use. On the contrary, we read that in his presence the disciples were reduced to pluck ears of corn to relieve their hunger. So, likewise, when fatigued with his journey, he sat at the well talking with the Samaritan, it is not said that he created food, but that he sent his disciples to fetch some from the neighboring city. So that it is not

likely that Christ was fed in the desert by any miracle, for his miracles were all wrought in public, and in the presence of many. Yet there were none here present with him but angels ; what, then, can we here find to meditate on ? There were no dwellings here, nor victuals to be found ready prepared : so that we may conceive that the angels brought thither the food they found elsewhere prepared. And why may we not believe it to have been so, when the like happened to Daniel ? For when the prophet Abacuc (Dan. xiv.) had prepared the pottage for his reapers, an angel of the Lord took him by the hair of the head to Daniel, from Judea to Babylon, that he might eat, and then brought him back again. Let us then piously meditate, and rejoice with our divine Lord at his victorious dinner, and with the Blessed Virgin, who bore a part in his joy, though distant from him. For we may reasonably conjecture that the heavenly host who came to pay their homages to our divine Saviour after his victories over Satan, finding him pressed with hunger, went in his name to the Blessed Virgin, his mother, and brought from her the necessary food of her own preparing, which they respectfully laid before him to eat. And with what love, honor, and devotion, may we not suppose they administered everything to him ; one presenting him bread, another helping him to drink, another obsequiously tendering to him the fish, or other humble provision his blessed mother had dressed for him ; and all jointly entertaining him with heavenly music and divine canticles. This done, our divine Lord dismisses them to their celestial habitation, descends from the mountain, and prepares to return to his blessed mother to console her. And here, again, behold the Lord of all things undertaking another laborious journey on foot ; and condole with him. He came by the way of the Jordan, where John be holding him advancing forwards, pointed him out with his finger, crying out at the same time, “Behold the Lamb of God : behold him who takes away the sins of the world.” John i. “It is he, it is he himself, on whom I saw the Holy Ghost descending, when I baptized him.” And again, the next day, seeing him walk by the side of the Jordan, he cried out a second time, “Behold the Lamb of God.” Then Andrew, with another of John’s disciples, went after Jesus : and our divine Lord, anxious of their salvation, to give them the greater confidence in him, turned about to them, and asked, “Whom do you seek?” To which they returned, “Where, Lord, is your habitation?” He then took them with him to the little house he had retired to in those parts ; and they staid with him the whole day. After

this, Andrew brought with him his brother Peter, whom Jesus courteously received, knowing well what he designed him to be. He then told him, that he should afterwards be called Cephas or Peter ; and thus they became acquainted, and in some measure intimate. Afterwards, Jesus having a mind to go into Galilee to his blessed mother, he left those parts, and set out on his journey.

When he returned home, his holy parents were transported with inexpressible joy : the sacred virgin ran to embrace him, and receive him in her tender and immaculate arms ; to whom, and to her venerable spouse, the divine Jesus, reverently inclining, returned his tender expressions of joy with mutual tenderness, and remained with them, as he used to do.

CHAPTER XVII

CHRIST OPENS THE BOOK IN THE SYNAGOGUE

THUS far, by the grace of God, we have regularly treated the passages of the life of Christ, without omitting any, or at least very few circumstances that may be supposed to have attended him : but I do not design to continue the same hereafter, for it would be too prolix to reduce into practical meditations everything he said and did . Besides, it ought to be our chief study, after the example of St. Cecily, to bear in our breasts the circumstances relating to him. Wherefore, for the future, I shall only collect some of the principal facts to meditate assiduously on, till we come to his Passion ; for there nothing ought to be omitted. Neither ought we elsewhere to omit anything wholly, or to neglect meditating on it in a proper place and time. But I do not intend to be so extensive in meditations hence forward, unless occasionally. Let it suffice then, to place before your eyes the bare facts and sayings, on which you yourselves may at leisure piously and familiarly meditate. For in this seems to consist the chief sweetness, efficacy, and fruit of these meditations ; that, always and everywhere, you contemplate Christ in some one action or saying of his : as, when he is with his disciples, when he is with sinners, when he talks or preaches to the multitude, walking or sitting, sleeping or waking, eating or ministering to others, healing the sick, or doing other miracles. In these and such like circumstances consider all his gestures ; but especially contemplate his divine countenance, if you can bring it to your imagination, which, however, appears to me the most difficult part of meditation. When you are thus contemplating the divine face of Christ, consider whether he looks graciously upon you ; your conscience will tell you whether you may hope

it or not. Let what has been said in this chapter serve you to recur to, in whatever I may hereafter relate, without adding any meditation to it. But let us proceed to the remaining part of this blessed life.

After our Lord Jesus returned from being baptized, he persisted in his accustomed humility ; beginning, however, by degrees, to manifest himself in teaching and preaching in a private manner. For he is not said to have taken on him the function of a public preacher during the whole following year, that is, not till the miracle he wrought at the marriage feast, which was on the day twelve-months after he was baptized. And though he did sometimes preach, and suffer his disciples to baptize, yet, still after the imprisonment of the Baptist, he did not either by himself, or his disciples, wholly apply to preaching, especially in public. Even in this, giving us a lesson of surprising humility, by paying such a respect to John, who was so greatly inferior to him in preaching, as well as in everything else. He did not begin his mission with noise and ostentation, but humbly and gradually.

One day, therefore, being with the rest of the Jews in the synagogue, he stood up, and read in the book of Isaiah, the following words: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, wherefore he has anointed me, he has sent me to evangelize to the poor.” Isaiah I xi. Then folding the book, he said, “This Scripture is this day fulfilled, in your ears. ‘ ‘ Behold him then, here humbly taking upon him the office of a lecturer to them, and reading before them, with an affable and serene countenance: thus he lays the Scripture open to their understandings, and begins humbly to manifest himself in those words, “This Scripture is this day fulfilled ;” that is, in other words, “I am he, who is here spoken of.” While he was speaking, the whole astonished multitude dwelt on the modesty and beauty of his heavenly aspect, which added efficacy to the divine words he spoke ; for he was exceedingly beautiful, and inexpressibly eloquent. Of both which the prophet thus sung: “Beautiful of form above the children of men; grace is diffused in thy lips.” Ps. xliv.

CHAPTER XVIII

HE CALLS HIS DISCIPLES

AND now our Lord Jesus began to call his disciples, and to solicit the salvation of our race ; still preserving untouched his former humility. Peter and Andrew were the first he called ; and these he called three times. The first time of his calling them was, as above, near the river Jordan, where they first became a little acquainted with him. John I. The second was from the ship, when they had been catching fish, as St. Luke relates. Luke v. Then they followed him only with a design of returning home ; but then they heard some part of his doctrine. The third was likewise from the ship, when, according to St. Mark, he said to them, Come after me, I will make you fishers of men." Mark i. "Then, leaving their nets, they followed him. Ibid. So likewise he called James and John, at the same places, the two last times ; and what relates to them is contained in the same places where Peter and Andrew are treated of. He called also St. John at the marriage- feast, as St. Jerome says, though it is not mentioned in Scripture. He called St. Philip, saying, "follow me." John i. And so he did Matthew. Matt. ix. As to his manner of calling the rest, it is nowhere written. Consider here, then, and behold him in the before-mentioned vocations, and in his conversation with them ; with what affection he calls them, rendering himself affable, familiar, and sociable with them ; attracting them inwardly and outwardly, bringing them to his mother's, and frequently condescending to go with them to their houses. He taught them, instructed them, and was equally careful of them as a mother is of an only son. It is said as a tradition from St. Peter's verbal account that whenever he slept at the same place with them, if, rising in the night to pray according to his custom, he found any of them slightly covered, he would graciously take the pains to wrap them up warm, having an extraordinary tenderness for them. For though they were

but men of mean extraction and condition, yet he knew what he had designed them for, and that they were to be the princes of the world, and the appointed leaders of his faithful in the spiritual war to be waged against Satan. And here, for God's sake, consider from what small beginnings the Church took its rise. The Lord would not make choice of the wise and powerful of this world, lest the wonders he was about to perform should be ascribed to their abilities : but reserving these prodigies to himself, redeemed us out of the abundance of his own goodness, power, and wisdom.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CONVERSION OF WATER INTO WINE AT THE MARRIAGE-FEAST

ALTHOUGH it is uncertain whose marriage this was. that was celebrated at Cana of Galilee, as ecclesiastical history notices, we may, for meditation sake, suppose it to be that of St. John the Evangelist, which St. Jerome seems to affirm in his preface upon St. John. Our blessed Lady was there present, not as a stranger invited thither, but as the head and principal lady of the feast, and the chief manager of it ; so that she was as it were at home, being in the house of her sister, whose elder she was. This may be gathered, first, from the text, which tells us that the mother of Jesus was there, but that Jesus and his disciples were invited thither : which ought to be understood likewise of all the rest of the persons present. So that when Mary Salome, the wife of Zebedee, came to her to Nazareth to tell that she designed to marry her son John, our blessed Lady went back with her to Cana some days before the appointed time of the feast, to make preparations for it, insomuch, that when the guests were invited to it she was actually there. Secondly, it may be gathered from her taking notice of the want of wine ; by which she appears not so much to be a guest, as concerned in the distribution of the entertainment, and therefore perceived the wine to be deficient. For if she had been sitting there as a guest, is it not likely the modest Virgin would have sat by her Son, amidst the men ? And if she had, would she have risen up among them to complain of the want of wine ? Or even had she been seated among the women, had she, think you, been more sensible of the wants of wine than any other of her sex there present ? Or would she have risen from her seat to acquaint her Son with it ? For we cannot suppose, that she called out aloud. All this seems unlikely ;

and therefore we may with more probability suppose, that she was present there, not merely as a guest, but rather as one who served and ministered as before-mentioned, for it is said of her, that she was ever ready and officious in helping and serving others.

The third is, that she commanded the servants to go to her Son, and to do whatever else she appointed them: by which it is plain, that she had a superiority over them, and that the feast was ordered and disposed according to her management ; and therefore she was solicitous, lest anything necessary should be wanting. Hence then, according to this manner, consider our Lord Jesus at this feast, eating with the rest of the company, seated not at the head of the guests, nor amongst the chief of those who were invited, but in the lowest place, and among the poorest and meanest, as we may gather from his own words: “ When thou art invited to a feast, sit down in the lowest place.” Luke xiv. Wherefore, as it was ever his custom to teach first by example, what he afterwards taught by words, it is most likely, that he took not the first and chief place at this feast, after the manner of the proud and vain : but rather, that he chose to sit in the lowest seat, among the more simple and the meaner sort of company.

Contemplate here, likewise, our blessed Lady how obsequious and cheerful she is, and diligently careful that all things might be performed with great exactness and decency : submissively helping the servants, and showing them how, and of what things they should serve and minister to those who were invited. And when the feast was almost towards the end, they came to her and said : “ There is no more wine left to set before them.” To whom she answered : “ Wait a short time, and I will procure that you may have more.” And presently departing, she went to her Son Jesus, who sat humbly at the lower end of the table, and said to him “ My Son, they have no more wine, and this, our sister, being poor, I know not how we shall supply this want.” But Jesus answered and said : “ Woman, what is this to me and thee?” This answer could not but seem severe to the holy Virgin. But as Si. Bernard remarks, “ those words were full of mystery, and were given for our greater instruction.”

Wherefore, the saint, in this place, speaks to this effect: “ Do you ask, O Lord, what is this to thee and to her ? Is it nothing to the mother and her Son? Do you ask what it appertains to her, when thou thyself art the blessed fruit of her virginal womb ? Is she not the same who conceived without

prejudice to her virginity, and brought forth without offense to her modesty ? Is it not she, in whose womb you vouchsafed to be enclosed the space of nine months, whose sacred breasts gave you suck, and with whom, at the age of twelve years, you came back from Jerusalem, and was obedient to her? Why then, most beloved Jesus, do you now perplex and grieve her tender soul, saying : ‘ What is it to me and to thee, O woman I already comprehend that it was not to reproach her, or to confound the great modesty of your virgin mother, which made you say : * Woman, what is that to me and to thee ?’ For when the servants came to you by her orders, you did without hesitation what she suggested.

“Why then, gentle reader, did he first here make her this answer ? Truly for no other reason than for our instruction, and to teach us that they, who having forsaken the world by a thorough conversion to Almighty God, should have no longer a tie to their carnal friends, relations or parents ; and that an over solicitude for the supplying of their necessities should not deter them from the daily study and practice of those spiritual exercises belonging to their state and calling. For though as long as we are of the world, there is a duty incumbent upon us to take care of our parents ; yet, when we have once forsaken it, so far as even to forsake ourselves with it, we ought upon a much stronger motive to relinquish all temporal care and solicitude for them. To which purpose, it is written of a certain holy monk or hermit, who having quitted the world, and lived a long time a solitary and retired life in the desert, being one day earnestly entreated by his own brother for his advice in some worldly and temporal affair, he calmly desired him to consult another of their brethren who had been dead long before ; to whom, when the brother replied, with much surprise at his advice, that his other brother was dead ; so am I, answered the monk, also dead to this world, and therefore have nothing to do in it, or with its troublesome affairs. This is what our Lord Jesus meant when he answered his blessed mother, saying : ‘Woman, what is that to me and to thee ?’ Clearly teaching us not to be careful or solicitous for our friends and relations, or even parents themselves, in those things which are contrary to, or inconsistent with the rules religion prescribes to us. This he also confirmed in another place, when, being told by one of the by-standers, that his mother and brethren waited without desiring to speak to him, he said, ‘

Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?’ “Matt. xii. Thus far St. Bernard.

But to return to our subject : The Blessed Virgin was not in the least dismayed or dejected at this unexpected answer of her beloved Son : but full of confidence in his great bounty and goodness, she presently returned to them, and said: “Go to my Son, and whatever he shall say to you, do ye.” John ii. They went as she had ordered them : and having filled the stone water pots, which stood there, with water, as our Lord had commanded, he again said to them, “Draw now, and carry to the chief steward.” Here, first, we may consider, the great prudence and wisdom of our Lord Jesus, in sending the wine first to the chief and most dignified person at the feast. Secondly, we may likewise consider, that our Lord sat not near him, but far below him, when he said : “ Take it to the master of the feast.” Whereby it appears, that he held the first place among the invited, and our Lord Jesus the lowest. The servants, however, gave the wine to the chief steward, and to the rest of the company, who openly declared the manner how it was made, they being eye-witnesses of the miracle ; and his disciples then believed in him. When the feast was ended, Jesus took John apart by himself, and said unto him, “Leave this woman whom thou hast chosen for thy wife, and follow me, and I will lead thee to a far more sublime union and heavenly marriage than this.” Hereupon he immediately left his wife, and followed Christ, and became his disciple. And here we may learn many profitable things for our instruction and example. The first is, that our Lord, sanctifying by his presence this marriage, gave us to understand that matrimony is both a lawful and honorable state, and ordained by God himself. And in calling St. John from the same, he shows the spiritual marriage and union of the soul with God in a single life and a state of virginity, to be much more excellent and perfect.

After our Lord Jesus had wrought this miracle, he departed thence, and resolved now to attend to those things only which regarded the salvation of man ; and therefore determined thenceforward to preach his heavenly doctrine openly to all mankind. He would first, however, conduct his holy mother safely home to her little habitation. Wherefore, taking her by the hand, and being followed by St. John, and the rest of his disciples, they went into Capharnaum, which is near Nazareth ; and after some few days, they from thence reached Nazareth. Contemplate here, devout reader, this

blessed couple, the mother and the Son. Consider them humbly traveling on foot ; and though wearied with the fatigues of their journey, yet united by the strictest ties of love to each other. O what a heavenly couple ! Such the world was never before blessed with. Consider likewise his disciples who reverently follow them, and attentively listen to the sacred doctrine which proceeds from the mouth of their divine master; who was never idle, but was ever instructing them in such things as might redound to their welfare. Wherefore we may piously imagine, that the abundance of heavenly consolation, which they reaped from g**ch sacred conversation, greatly allayed the toils of their .fatiguing journey.

CHAPTER XX

THE SERMON OF THE LORD ON THE MOUNT, WHICH HE BEGINS BY POVERTY

OUR Lord calling his disciples apart from the crowd, ascended with them to mount Tabor, about two miles distant from Nazareth, to infuse into them his divine doctrine. For it was fit to instruct them first, who were to be appointed masters and leaders of the rest. He taught them many things in that place in a most beautiful and ample sermon : and no wonder a sermon should be such, which was delivered by the mouth of the Lord. He taught them the beatitudes, the dignity of prayer, fasting, alms-deeds, and many truths relating to every other virtue, as appears in the holy gospel. Which I advise you, gentle reader, to peruse seriously and frequently, and to endeavor to enrich your memory with such lessons of spiritual sublimity ; but which would require too great a prolixity to consider here ; neither is it proper to crowd meditations like these with too many expositions of scripture. However, I shall not entirely drop them, but here and there intersperse some ‘few, and add to them some moral reflections of my own, or of the holy fathers, as occasion, and your instruction may require. Let it at present suffice to observe, that our Lord began this his exhortation with poverty ; giving us thereby to understand, that poverty is the first foundation of all spiritual structures. Hence, nothing can be more inconsistent than for Christ, the pattern of poverty, to be followed by persons loaded with temporal riches ; since they, ‘whose affections are linked to such fleeting vanities, are more properly in a state of slavery than freedom. And they only are qualified for being happy, whose hearts are at

liberty. Therefore it was that Christ told them, “ Blessed are poor in spirit, etc.” For no heart is free, but that which is linked to God : and they only are so, whose affections tend only to him. We render ourselves subject to whatever we affectionately love ; and therefore we ought to love nothing but him, because subjection to him is the only true liberty. The truly poor, therefore, may justly be called blessed, who, for God’s sake, contemns all things else. For, by this means, he becomes, in a great measure, united to God. Of this great virtue St. Bernard says: “Poverty is a noble kind of wings that elevate us in a moment to the kingdom of heaven. The other virtues flowing from this, obtain us only a promise of it ; but to poverty, felicity is rather given than promised : wherefore, our Saviour speaks in the present tense, ‘for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ ‘ Matt. xii. And a little farther, he adds: “We see some poor persons sorrowful and pusillanimous, who would be quite otherwise, were their poverty such as we are speaking of ; for then they would consider themselves as princes, and possessors of a heavenly kingdom. But, alas, the generality of mankind would be poor, upon condition of wanting nothing, and love no other poverty than such a one as is attended with no inconvenience.” And elsewhere : “ And I,” says he, “ when once I am exalted above the earth, may boldly affirm, that I will draw all things after me ; for if once I put on the likeness of my brother, I may, without rashness, adopt his speech ; let not then the rich of this world imagine, that the brethren of Christ possess nothing but heavenly things, because they hear him say, ‘ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ No ; for they are likewise in possession of the earth ; having nothing, yet possessing all things ; not begging like paupers, but receiving as masters; so much the more truly masters of all, as they covet nothing. In a word, the whole world, to the faithful lover of poverty, is a fund of riches ; because prosperity and adversity are alike subservient and beneficial to him. The covetous worldling yearns after earthly things like a beggar ; the faithful lover of poverty despises them like a prince. “Ask any one of those who with insatiable eagerness pursue worldly gain, what they think of them who, selling what they have to distribute the price of it to the poor, purchase the kingdom of heaven with earthly substance ; and whether he looks upon them to act- prudently or not? He will, doubtless, approve their wisdom. Ask him again, why he neglects to do himself what he deems well done by others ? He will answer, I cannot do it. But why ? Truly

because tyrannizing avarice will not permit him ; because he is not free ; because he has neither right to, nor possession of what he seems to enjoy. If they are thine, put them out to interest, purchase with them a solid estate, and with an earthly fund buy an eternal heavenly one. If you are not lord enough of them to have this in your power, I shall deem you not master, but slave to them ; the steward, not the possessor.” Thus far St. Bernard. Now let us return to our meditation. Consider, then, our Lord Jesus humbly sitting on the ground, with his disciples around him. How affably does he converse with them, as if one of themselves : teaching, and in a beautiful, benign, and pathetic manner, inculcating to them the practice of the above-mentioned virtues. And ever study, as I have before advised you, to contemplate his divine countenance. Cast an attentive eye likewise on his disciples, and imagine you see with what reverence, humility, and fixed attention they observe his blessed aspect, hear his wonderful discourse, and imprint it in their minds: reaping sovereign delight from his words and heavenly looks. In this meditation, endeavor to share their delight with them : attentive, as if you beheld him speaking ; and ready to approach with them, in case you should be called ; dwelling on this pious subject, according to the lights and graces which it shall please God to bestow on you.

After the sermon is over, behold our Lord Jesus descending from the mount with his disciples, and familiarly conversing with them upon the road ; and observe how that little simple congregation follow him, not in any formal order, but as the hen is followed by her chickens; each crowding about him, and struggling to get near him, the better to hear his divine discourse. Think you see the multitude running to meet him, and bringing their sick to be cured by him ; for he cured all

CHAPTER XXI

THE SERVANT OF THE CENTURION, AND THE SON OF THE PRINCE CURED

AT Capharnaum, a certain centurion, that is, a captain of a company composed of a hundred men, had a servant who lay sick. Full of faith, therefore, he sent to our Lord Jesus Christ to entreat him to cure him : and our humble Lord answered, “I will come and cure him.” Luke. vii. When the centurion heard the answer, he Immediately sent back to him this message: “Lord, I am not worthy thou shouldst enter under my roof : say but the word, and my servant shall be healed.” Upon which, Jesus, applauding his faith, cured the servant at a distance. In the same city lived a prince or petty king, who went in person to Jesus, beseeching him to come to his house and cure his sick son. But Jesus refused to go, though he acquiesced to cure the youth. Here consider the merit of faith in the centurion, and this fresh instance of humility in our Saviour, who offered himself to go to the servant, though he refused to go to the pompous prince. Here you see that no exception ought to be made to persons. “Our Lord shows more regard to the servant of the officer, than to the son of the king.” John iv. Thus then it little becomes us to show any regard in our charitable offices to external pomp and appearance ; it is the goodness, the right intention, and necessity of the person, which are to draw our attention. In a word our services to our neighbor are to be guided, not by complaisance, but by Christian charity.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PARALYTIC BROUGHT IN TO OUR LORD BY THIS HOUSE-TOP AND CURED

IN the same city of Capharnaum, while our Lord Jesus was teaching in a certain house where Pharisees and doctors of the law, from all parts of Judea and Jerusalem, were assembled to hear him, some people came thither, and struggled to get in, with a man ill of the palsy, whom they had brought on purpose to have him cured by our Saviour. Matt, ii., Luke v. But finding it impossible to get in at the door, on account of the great crowd, they got upon the top of the house, and carried him in that way and placed him before Christ. Jesus then, seeing their great faith, said to the paralytic: “Thy sins are forgiven thee.” Mark ix. The Pharisees and doctors, looking maliciously on, said to each other, that he had blasphemed, since he attributed to himself, whom they considered as mere man, the power of forgiving sins, which belonged only to God. Our benign and humble Lord, searcher of the hearts and reins of man, answered, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? That you may know,” added he, “that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, I say, arise and walk.” Mark ix.

Here are four things worthy of our meditation. First, perspicuity of Christ’s understanding, who saw into their hearts. Secondly, that illness is often the consequence of sin, and that absolution from this often frees us from that ; which may likewise be gathered from the sick man cured at the fish-pond, whom our Saviour cautioned not to sin again, lest something worse should befall him. Thirdly, that great must be the merit of faith, since the faith of one person may be beneficial to another : as we have before

observed in the case of the centurion's servant, and shall farther see, in the daughter of the Cananean, who was cured by the faith of the mother. And it is daily verified in the baptism of infants, who, if they die before the age of discretion, receive, by the faith of others, the earnest by which they are saved through the merits of Christ, contrary to the accursed doctrine of some heretics. Fourthly, we may meditate on the goodness of our divine Lord sitting amidst the perverse Pharisees, affably confounding their malice, and working a miracle to try to convert them. Here recollect what I have said on the general subject of meditation.

CHAPTER XXIII

OUR LORD CURES SIMON'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

IN the same city it happened likewise that our Lord called in at the house of Simon-Peter, whose mother-in-law was in a high fever. Our humble Lord, informed of it, familiarly stretched forth his sacred hand to her ; and she immediately arose, and ministered to him and his disciples. But what did she minister ? We do not find that recorded. You may then devoutly imagine, that in the house of such poor people nothing but poor and humble viands, such as were soon prepared, were laid before them. Piously fancy too, that you see our Lord himself humbly helping to set things in decent order, in the house of his disciples : these, and such other humble exercises, you may entertain your thoughts with ; for all such, we may reasonably conceive our Lord to have done, who was come to minister, and not to be ministered unto. Thus then consider him familiarly seated at table, under this humble roof, in the midst of this little company of simple ones, and cheerfully partaking of their coarse food, with so much the more pleasure as his beloved poverty presided there.

CHAPTER XXIV

OUR LORD SLEEPS IN THE BOAT

OUR Lord Jesus entering into a boat with his disciples, composed himself to sleep, laying his head on a pillow ; for he might well be fatigued, as he passed his nights generally in prayer, and his days in the toil of preaching. When he was asleep, a sudden storm arising, the disciples were affrighted, and apprehended themselves in danger of perishing, but dared not awake him for some time. At length however, overcome with fear, they roused him, crying, “ Lord, save us, we perish.” Our Lord arose, and, chiding them for their little faith, “commanded the sea and the winds, and the storm gave over.” Matt, vii., Mark iv., Luke viii. In these circumstances contemplate our Lord, according to the general rules I have before given you. Add this farther consideration, that though God seems sometimes to sleep to us, and to our concerns, especially in time of tribulation and need, yet we ought to remain firm in faith and confidence, without staggering; for he is ever really awake, and diligently watchful in what regards our good and safety.

CHAPTER XXV

THE WIDOW'S SON RAISED BY OUR LORD

AS our Lord was once going towards the city of Nairn, he met a multitude of people bearing to the grave the corpse of a young man, the late son of a widow, who followed. The compassionate Jesus, moved to pity at her grief, approached, stopped the bearers, and made them set down the bier: then addressing himself to the corpse, said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." And the youth, who had been dead, arose, and he restored him to his mother ; at which all were astonished, and gave praises to God for so great a wonder. Luke vii. Here recur to the general heads of meditation.

CHAPTER XXVI

OUR LORD RAISES A GIRL FROM THE DEAD, AND CURES MARTHA

AT the instance of a very considerable man, our Lord Jesus was going with him to cure his daughter. A great multitude accompanied him, among whom was a woman extremely ill, who is reported to have been Martha, the sister of Mary Magdalen. This woman, acquainted with the wonders he had wrought, said to herself, that if she could but touch the hem of his garment, she should be made well. Accordingly approaching, though with fear, she touched “ Who has touched me ?” When Peter answered, “Lord, you see what crowds press upon and molest you, and you ask, Who has touched me ?” Matt. ix. Here consider the patience of Christ, who suffers himself to be thus frequently molested and pressed by the rude populace. However, our Lord well knew what he said, and therefore added, “ I know that a virtue proceeded from me.” Luke vii. Martha then manifested her cure, and our Lord was pleased with curing her, with whom he was afterwards divinely intimate, and told her, “Thy faith hath made thee whole.” Here again you have a fresh commendation of faith : here likewise you see that Christ is willing that his miracles should be made manifest for the good of the public, and yet is so humble as to conceal the part he has in them, attributing to the merit of her faith the effects of his own divine power.

Here too it is worth your notice to observe what St. Bernard remarks: “Every perfect servant of Christ,” says he, “may be called the hem or lowest part of Christ’s garment, on account of the mean opinion he has of himself,” Let them, therefore, who arrive to this pitch of perfection, perceive that God hears their prayers, and grants them the cure of diseases, or other miraculous powers, take care not to be elated, nor attribute to

themselves what is properly his work, and not theirs. For though Martha touched the hem with hopes of being cured by the touch, as she really was, yet the virtue of the cure came from the Lord, and not from the hem : and therefore he said, “ I know that a virtue proceeded from me.” Mind this well, and never attribute any good to yourself, for it all comes from our Lord Jesus.

Our Saviour after this went to the house of the great man above mentioned, and finding that the girl, whom he came to cure, was dead, he raised her again to life. Here again recur to the general heads of contemplation I have already proposed to you, and so often mentioned.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE CONVERSION OF MAGDALEN, AND OTHER THINGS

OUR gracious Lord, one day, by the invitation of Simon the Pharisee, went to dine with him, which he was accustomed to do, out of his natural courtesy, and the zeal he had for the salvation of souls. Luke vii. Thus the divine Jesus attracted to himself those for whose sakes he came down from heaven, by eating, and familiarly conversing among them. The love of poverty, too, was another motive that induced him to do so. For he was extremely poor, and had received nothing of earthly substance for himself, or those that belonged to him. And therefore this pattern of humility readily and cheerfully accepted of their invitations as occasion required.

Magdalen, who probably had often heard him preach, and inwardly loved him, though she had yet given no proofs of it, chanced to hear of our Saviour's dining at the house of this Pharisee. Wherefore, touched already with a real sorrow at heart for her sins, convinced that he alone could rid her of them, and resolved no longer to delay her conversion, she went immediately to where our Saviour was ; and with her eyes and face towards the ground, she passed by the whole company, regardless of all, till she came to her beloved Lord. Then throwing herself prostrate before him, with a certain secret confidence which her inward love for him gave her, with a torrent of tears she began to bathe his sacred feet, sighing, and tacitly saying in her heart, "Lord, I firmly believe, know, and confess you to be my God, and my sovereign ; I have offended your divine majesty by many and great transgressions, and have multiplied my sins above the number of the sands of the sea. But, wicked sinner as I am, I fly to your mercy for refuge. I grieve and repent me from my soul, I crave pardon, am prepared to amend,

and determined to conform my life for the future to your blessed precepts, without ever departing from them. Oh ! reject me not ; turn me not away from you ; I am sensible I can have recourse to none but you, and you alone I love above all things. Repulse me not, then, but punish my iniquities as you shall think proper; but yet grant me the mercy I sue for.” All this while she kept bathing the blessed feet of Jesus with the plenteous flood of her unbidden tears. Hence you may plainly see that our Lord went always barefooted.

At length, the illustrious penitent, with becoming resolution, stopped her tears awhile ; and, judging them unworthy to fall on our Lord’s sacred feet, she wiped them off with her beautiful hair, which she used on this occasion, because she had nothing more precious with her for that purpose, and because she wished to make those very instruments of her former vanity instrumental to her present conversion ; besides that, she wished not to remove her face off the feet of her divine master. When she had wiped them dry, she devoutly pressed them with her lips, with fervent eagerness that spoke her glowing love, and afterwards anointed them with precious ointments, as they were fatigued with frequent and laborious traveling. Behold her then attentively, consider maturely her devotion, and dwell awhile on her love to Christ, and his love to her and endeavor to be perfectly present at this entertainment, which was very solemn in every circumstance. Contemplate likewise the divine Jesus, how benignly he receives, and how patiently he bears with all she does. He suspends his dinner till she has done weeping and anointing his feet ; and all the guests are in suspense at the novelty. Simon could not help judging our Lord in his mind ; thinking he would not have suffered such a woman to approach him if he had been a prophet, and had known who she was. But our Lord soon showed his prophetic power, by answering Simon’s thoughts with a parable of the debtor. And openly to show that love is the great end of all, concluded by saying, “Many sins are forgiven her, because she has much loved.” Luke vii. And then turning to her said, “Go, in peace.” O delightful and pleasing sentence ! How gladly did Magdalen hear it, and how joyfully retire ! And now truly converted, she led ever after an innocent, holy life ; and firmly adhered to the service and honor of him and his blessed mother. Contemplate, therefore, gentle reader, these circumstances with all the

devotion you can summon, and labor to imitate this charity, which is so highly approved by our Lord Jesus, as well by acts as words.

Here then you have an express proof that charity works a perfect peace and reconciliation between God and sinners. Hence it is that St. Peter tells us, that “Charity covers a multitude of sins.” 1 Peter iv. As charity then is the soul of every virtue, and none are pleasing to God that are not inflamed with charity, I shall quote some authorities to induce you to aim at the acquisition of this great virtue, in order to render yourself acceptable to the blessed Jesus.

St. Bernard, then, says of it: “This excellent gift, charity, must needs be of incomparable worth, since the divine spouse is so earnest in enforcing it to his new bride. In one place, saying, ‘In this all shall know you are my Disciples, if you have love for one another.’ John xiii. In another, ‘I give you a new precept, that you love one another.’ Ibid. And again, ‘This is my commandment, that you love one another.’ Ibid. xv. Praying else where, that they become one, as he and the Father are one.” A little lower the saint adds : “What can we imagine comparable to this, which is preferred even to martyrdom, and to a faith sufficient to move mountains ? Thus then when I say to you ‘Peace be with you,* John xx. I mean, may your peace proceed to you from within yourselves, and then all that may seem to threaten you with disturbance from without, will neither have power to fright nor offend you.”

The same saint tells us : “The value of every soul is rated by the measure of its charity : as for example, the soul that has much charity is great and vast ; that which has but little, is small and diminutive, nay nothing ; for, as the Apostle in his first epistle to the Corinthians, chap, v., tells us, ‘If I have not charity, I am nothing.’ However, if it begins to possess even so slender a portion, as to love where it is beloved, to salute brethren and those who salute, we cannot say that soul is absolutely nothing. I will allow a soul to be not quite nothing, if at least it returns love for love, and cultivates social charity. And yet, according to our Lord’s words, ‘how much more than nothing does it do V I cannot then, by any means, think a soul great, but rather very little and very contracted, when I discover so slender a portion of charity in it : but if it grows up and improves so, passing the narrow limits of so contracted a charity, to reach with liberty of spirit the utmost bounds of gratuitous bounty, by extending itself with profuseness of good-

will to every neighbor, and by loving all as itself ; can we any longer say to it, what dost thou do more ? For a soul that dilates itself thus much, must have a heart capacious enough to contain all mankind, even such as it is not tied to by blood, hopes of interest, or any other obligation, save that of which the Apostle speaks, ‘Owe nobody anything, but that ye love one another.’ However, if you will make farther advances towards the pious invasion of the kingdom of charity, and are desirous of carrying your conquest to its farthest confines, open the bowels of your compassion to your very enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute and revile you, and study to be peaceful to those who hate peace. Then, then, indeed, the altitude and extent of the heavens and of your soul are alike, and their beauty the same. Then will be fulfilled in you what is sung of God, ‘ extending the Heavens as a skin.’ Ps. ciii. And in this heaven of your soul, grown to so miraculous a height, width, and beauty, the Most High will delight to dwell, to expatiate and manifest in it his immensity and glory.” Thus far St. Bernard.

You see then, pious reader, how useful and necessary a virtue is charity, without which it is impossible to please God, and with which every one is sure to be agreeable in his sight. Study, therefore, with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your force to possess it. For this possession will enable you to bear with constancy, courage, and cheerfulness, the greatest hardships and severities for the sake of God and your neighbor.

CHAPTER XXVIII

JOHN SENDS HIS DISCIPLES TO JESUS

THAT glorious soldier and precursor of Christ, St. John the Baptist, was fettered in prison, by order of Herod, for the defense of truth, in reproving him for detaining the wife of his brother. Matt. xi. Here it was that, desirous of committing his disciples to the care of our Lord Jesus, he thought of sending them on a message to him ; that, hearing the words of this divine oracle, and seeing the wonders he wrought, they might be inflamed with the love of him, and become his followers. Accordingly he despatched them to Jesus, whom they asked in the name of John, Is it you who are come, or are we to expect another?" Our Saviour was then amidst a great multitude. Behold him then, attentively, and see with what a pleasing aspect he receives the messengers of John, wisely answered them, first in deeds, and then in words. In their presence, then, he cured the deaf, the dumb, and the blind, wrought many other miracles, preached to the people, and then among other things said to these envoys, "Go, relate to John what you have heard and seen." They gladly performed their embassy, and related all to John, who as gladly received the joyful tidings. And after the death of John these disciples firmly adhered to Christ. After their departure our Saviour bestowed great encomiums on John to the multitude, as that he was a prophet, nay, more than a prophet, and that greater than he had not appeared among the children of men, etc., as you may find in the gospel. Contemplate, then, our divine Lord in every situation, whether preaching or teaching, or doing aught else, as I have already counseled you so often.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE DEATH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

HERE we may pause awhile in meditation on the glorious end of St. John the Baptist. When the impious Herod and his infamous adulteress had perhaps already plotted the death of the Baptist, that they might escape the reproaches due to their criminal intercourse, it happened that at a public entertainment, Herodias, the wretched fruit of their incestuous bed, danced so much to the satisfaction of Herod, that he promised her for a recompense the head of John; and in consequence of this grant, he was beheaded in the prison. Behold here, how great a man is put to death, and how basely and ignominiously he is murdered by the iniquity of a reigning tyrant. Oh, great God, how did you suffer this ! What can be the cause of the death of so great a man, one of such perfection and sanctity as to be taken for Christ ?

But if you would digest this well, consider first the baseness and barbarity of his murderers, and then meditate on the singular greatness and eminence of John, and you will find fresh matter for surprise. You have already seen above, the many and great encomiums bestowed upon him, by our divine Saviour ; now hear what applauses St. Bernard gives him in his panegyric on him: “That Mother and Mistress of all Churches, the Roman Church, of which it is said, I have prayed for thee, Peter, that thy faith fail not, received her consecration and badge in honor of St. John the Baptist, next after the name of our Saviour. It was indeed fit that the singular friend of his beloved spouse should pass thither when she was to be raised to her sovereign dignity. Peter was crucified, Paul was beheaded, but the preference of dignity was still given to the precursor. The purple of Rome ?” the blood of martyrs, the sovereign honor belongs to that holy patriarchate. Still, John is everywhere greater, singularly wonderful in all things, and above all. Who was ever so gloriously proclaimed ? Who was so

amply replenished with the Holy Ghost in the womb of his mother? Whose nativity does the Church solemnize except his? Who was ever so fond of the solitude of a desert ? Who was ever known to converse so sublimely? Who was the first preacher of penance, and the kingdom of heaven John. Who baptized the King of Glory ? John. Who plainly revealed the sacred mystery of the Trinity? John. To whom did Christ ever give testimony but to John ? And finally, to whom, after Christ and his Mother, does the Church pay so much honor as to John ? John is a patriarch, nay, the last, and head of all the patriarchs. John is a prophet, nay, more than a prophet ; for him, whose coming he foretells, he points out with his finger ; John is an angel, and the chosen among angels ; our Saviour testifying it of him, saying : ‘ Behold I send my angel, etc.’ John 1. John is an apostle, and the first of apostles and their prince ; and the first of God’s messengers ; John is an evangelist and preacher of the gospel ; but the first in that office : John is a virgin, nay, the illustrious pattern of all virgins. The titlespring of purity, and mirror of chastity : John is a martyr, and the encouragement of other martyrs, and the soul of martyrdom from the birth to the death of Christ : he the voice calling out in the wilderness, he, the fore-runner of the judge, and the herald of the DIVINE WORD. He is Elias, and till his coming, the law and the prophets were so many lamps that beamed forth brightly and warmly their beneficent influence. I pass over in silence the proficiency he made in angelic perfections, by which he not only imitated every degree of that heavenly hierarchy, but even emulated the highest in seraphic wisdom and virtue.” Thus far St. Bernard. Now hear that holy archbishop of Ravenna, St. Peter Chrysogonus, in a panegyric on the day of his decollation : “ The life of the Baptist,” says he, “ is the school of virtue, the mastership of life, the plan of sanctity, and the model of justice, etc.” If, therefore, you compare the excellence of merit, and eminence of dignity in John, with the littleness and grovelling baseness of those who beheaded him, you cannot help being surprised. What, shall a common executioner, the basest of the human race, be empowered to take away the life of so great, so good a personage, as if he were the meanest and most execrable highwayman or murderer ! Behold him, then, with reverence and concern : how readily he stoops his neck to the command of this vile and reprobate butcher ; how humbly he bends his knees, and giving thanks to God, lays his neck on the block, and patiently receives on it the repeated strokes of the

barbarous executioner. Thus departs the Baptist, that intimate friend, near relation, and familiar servant of our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh! what a confusion is this for us, who, at the least visit of a trivial adversity, lose all sight of patience. John, innocent John, meets death, and such a death, with cheerfulness ; and we, stained with the spots of sin, and worthy the divine indignation, are unable to sustain the least contradiction or indignity, though but in bare words.

Our Saviour was absent from the city, when John was beheaded, though still in Judea. But when his death was published, our divine Lord wept for him, as did his disciples, and the Blessed Virgin, who had nursed him in his most tender infancy, and who still loved him with extreme affection. Our blessed Redeemer, however, consoled her, with telling her, that it was expedient that he should die for the defense of the justice of his heavenly Father, that he would soon receive the reward of his sufferings in heaven : and that it was not the will of the Almighty to protect his saints from death, since they are not designed for this world : their kingdom and country not being earthly but celestial ; that John was freed from the chains of the body, and the powers of death had no more force to retain him on earth, or to detain him from the kingdom of heaven, whither he would soon be transferred to reign with the Father. He then exhorts his blessed mother to be of good heart, as all was well with her beloved Baptist. Soon after this Christ retired from these parts to Galilee. Dwell, gentle reader, on the preceding subjects, endeavor to render yourself present to them, contemplate them devoutly, and when you have completed your meditation on these heads, as God shall be pleased to inspire you, proceed to others, and follow your blessed Saviour, step by step, whithersoever he goes.

CHAPTER XXX

THE CONFERENCE OUR LORD JESUS HAD WITH THE SAMARITAN WOMAN, AS HE SAT, BEING FAINT- AND WEARIED, BY THE SIDE OF THE WELL TO REST HIMSELF

IT happened upon a certain time, that as our Lord Jesus was going from the country of Judea into Galilee, he passed though the country of Samaria, and being wearied with the fatigue of his journey, which was the space of a,bout fifteen miles, he sat down to rest himself by the side of a well in the way, which is called the well of Jacob. Consider here, pious Christian, thy God, and contemplate awhile how he is pleased to condescend to be tired and faint for thy sake. He frequently traveled, was often wearied, and his whole life was laborious, painful, and full of troubles.

While our Lord sat thus by the well's side, his disciples went into the next town to provide meat to refresh themselves : in the meantime, there came a woman of that country, whose name was Lucia, to draw water from the well ; with whom our Lord began to discourse, and to manifest himself unto her, talking of many great and sublime mysteries. What the particulars of this discourse were, how his disciples returned again unto him, and how, by the woman's relation of him, the people of the city came out to him, and detained him with them for many days together, and how, at last, he departed from them, I shall wholly omit, and pass by at present, it being clearly set forth at large in the gospel of St. John, to which I refer you, there steadily to contemplate every action of our Lord Jesus. For concerning the

doctrine, which, for our instruction, may be gathered from this part of sacred history, there are many things concerning our Lord Jesus which are worthy of our greatest notice and attention. And first his great meekness, that our most humble Lord would vouchsafe to remain alone, while his disciples were gone into the city to buy provision.

Secondly, he disdained not to converse with that low and simple woman, and to treat with her of such sublime and sacred mysteries, as though he had been discoursing of them in the presence of the most learned and wise men. This ought to reprove and confound the pride of the more learned, who imagine their labor and pains to be lost, in bestowing their words, swelled with vanity, upon a few or only on one person, esteeming so slender an audience unworthy to receive the exposition of their sublime doctrine. Thirdly, we may consider his great poverty, mortification of the flesh, and humility : his disciples brought him meat from the city, and desired him to eat : but where did he eat ? Without the city, in the open air, and at the well's side, drinking of the water to quench his thirst. And in this poor and humble manner, being weary, faint, and hungry, he refreshed himself. Neither are we to imagine, that it was only once, or by chance, that this happened to him, but that it was his usual custom to do so. For we may well suppose, that our most humble Lord traveled through all the countries in the same manner, and that, though ever so faint and wearied, he oftentimes took his small refection, outside of the towns and habitations of the people, near some well or river, having neither delicate meats, curious plates, or delicious wines ; but the pure element from the river or fountain, was his chief and only liquor. He who makes the vineyard abundantly fruitful, the springs to flow with plenty, and gives life to all that move in the waters, was humbly contented, like another poor man, with bread and water only, upon bare ground. We may likewise contemplate how intent our Lord Jesus was in the study of heavenly things, and of such as regarded more the soul than the body ; for being asked by his disciples to eat of those meats which they had brought him, he answered them, saying : “ I have meat to eat, that you know not my meat is to do the will of him that sent me.” John iv. Wherefore he waited till the people of the city came, that he might preach to them ; desiring first to perform that which appertained to the nourishment of their souls, before that which belonged to the refreshment of his own body,

notwithstanding the great necessity he had for it. Contemplate well these things, and endeavor with all your study to imitate his virtues.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE DISCIPLES OF OUR LORD PLUCK EARS OF CORN AND EAT THEM, THROUGH HUNGER, ON THE SABBATH

AS the disciples of our Lord Jesus passed through the fields with him on the Sabbath-day, where corn was growing, they plucked some of the ears* and ate them through hunger. The Pharisees, who watched every word and action of our Lord, that they might find an occasion of accusing him of some breach of their law, reproved him and his disciples for it, saying: “Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath-day.” Matt. xii. But our Lord, to excuse them, first brought the example of David and his companions, who, when they were hungry, eat the bread of proposition. “Have you not read,” said he, “what David did when he was hungry, and they that were with him : how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the loaves of proposition, which were not lawful for him to eat, nor for them that were with him ; but for priests only?” Secondly, that the priests of the law, on the Sabbath-day, circumcised and offered sacrifice ; which are both corporal works. “ Have ye not read in the law,” said he again, “that on the Sabbath-days the priests in the temple do break the Sabbath, and are without blame?” Ibid. And what might have served for the greatest excuse, was, that the Lord of the Creation was himself present there, who was the author and master of the law, and therefore could give them leave to break it.

Let us now devoutly consider, and take compassion on the great poverty of the disciples, though in company of their Lord, who is the sovereign God and Master of all things. If we duly reflect on it, we cannot but be inspired

with the love of poverty and corporal suffering for his sake. For is it not strange to think that they, who, by a singular prerogative, were chosen to the sublime degree of the apostleship, and made the princes of the world, should be obliged by hunger to eat the ears of corn as if they were not men, but irrational animals ; and this too, in the presence of him, who is the Creator of all things, and who bountifully feeds and provides for every creature ; and yet he sees them suffer such want without bestowing any relief, as if he were not able to help them ? But our most gracious and merciful Lord, who wrought all things for our greater example, and for the good of our salvation, suffered them to be thus needy and poor, for the accomplishment of his great designs ; as he himself also had assumed the nature of man, with all the infirmities incident to it, but yet without sin. Wherefore, though he had compassion on them in this their hunger and distress, inasmuch as he was moved unto it by the tender love he bore them ; nevertheless, he was pleased with it, as he saw the good-will with which they suffered, out of pure love and affection to him.

And here all such as have forsaken the world for the love of our blessed Lord, have a perfect model from which they may copy all those virtues which are necessary for them to follow ; viz. : patience in distress, true poverty of spirit, and the virtue of abstinence, contrary to the vice of gluttony. And first, as to patience in all our necessities and wants : seeing that the disciples of our Lord Jesus, who had quitted all they possessed to follow him, suffered with cheerfulness and patience such great distress in his presence, whom they saw feed and relieve miraculously many thousands of other men, how much more ought we to be patient in the like necessities, when it shall please his divine goodness to afflict us with them ? We are neither so deserving his favors as they were, nor are we so perfectly established in his love ; but on the contrary, have deserved, for our impatience and ingratitude to so bountiful a God, much greater punishments, and many more wants than his goodness permits us to suffer, who, perhaps, has never yet permitted us to know any want at all.

Secondly, as to what relates to a perfect state of poverty : you are to understand that the poverty of our Lord Jesus far excelled in perfection, beyond any comparison, the voluntary poverty of any other person. For the poverty of those who, for the love of Christ, have forsaken all the riches and preferments of this transitory life, is generally in great repute with

worldlings, and is commended and esteemed by them as a sublime and noble virtue. But the poverty of our blessed Lord was held in contempt by all ; inasmuch as it was unknown to the world, that he voluntarily submitted to it ; wherefore they esteemed it to be of mere necessity, and what he could not avoid, as seems to appear both in him and his disciples, who were obliged by hunger to pluck and eat the ears of corn ; and that poverty, which we suffer not by choice, but through necessity, is too often reckoned a contemptible thing, so likewise was that of our blessed Lord ; for such as knew him, saw that he had neither house nor habitation wherein to repose or to put his head, which drew upon him the contempt and derision of all that beheld him. This we may gather from the too general practice of mankind, who conceive the utmost contempt for the poor and distressed ; but if, with patience and resignation, they submit to the divine will, they are in reality most worthy and pleasing in the sight of him who left them his glorious example : hence, it is a most dangerous and execrable sin to despise any man in his poverty or misery. The truly poor, however, are not those only who have forsaken all temporal riches, and make an outward show and profession of voluntary poverty, but they, who to this add the poverty of the spirit, that is, desire no plenty, nor seek any more comfort in the perishable goods of this life, than just as much as may suffice to support the infirmities of nature. For, if he that is poor remains so only for want of an opportunity of enjoying the goods and plenty of fortune, such a one has no share in the holy poverty of our Lord Jesus, but rather lives in poverty, misery, and distress in this life, without any merit of an eternal reward in the next. This is the true description of a perfect poverty, concerning which virtue St. Bernard speaks at large in his sermon upon the nativity of our Lord Jesus.

Thirdly, as to the virtue of abstinence, we may find most powerful examples of it both in the disciples of our Lord, and in our Lord Jesus himself. Gluttony is a vice against which we must struggle during our whole life. This we are taught by the holy fathers, who, by long experience, were true judges of the nature of its dangerous and repeated assaults. St. Bernard especially in many places tells us with what assiduity we ought to shun that vice and give to the body only so much nourishment as is necessary for its support. Whatever we allow it more than this, by feeding our lust, and exceeding our present necessities, exposes us to the danger of

death, both soul and body. By yielding to this passion, our virtue is so often overcome, that like irrational and senseless brutes we prefer the gratification of our greedy appetites, to every other consideration, which gives rise to many disorders and infirmities. Thus our health is impaired, and not only the body remains indisposed to serve God, but even the soul is so much defiled that it cannot recur to him with becoming purity and cleanliness of heart.

Seeing then, that the vice of gluttony is so dangerous in its consequences and so much condemned by the fathers, we must endeavor to shun it as much as is in our power, and obtain the virtue of abstinence, which we may learn from the example of our blessed Lord, of his disciples, and oilier saints. They have taught us to subdue oar flesh, and keep it in subjection by temperate food, and such a degree of abstinence as may be guided by the virtue of discretion, which, as St. Bernard saith, “is not only a virtue itself, but the director of all other virtues ; inasmuch as where this is wanting, that which may seem to be virtue, is only vice.” St. Gregory saith that, “Discretion is the mother and preserver of all other virtues.” Now discretion, in relation to abstinence, and the nourishing of our bodies, consists in this, as St. Augustine teaches in his book of confession, that a man ought to use the same moderation in eating and drinking for the nourishment of his body, as he would use in taking of a medicine for the cure of an infirmity. For as in taking physic we should take such a portion or quantity as is sufficient for healing our sores, or the curing our disease, so likewise, as hunger and thirst became the infirmities of mankind, by the transgression of Adam, meat and drink, which are medicines appointed for the curing of these infirmities, ought to be taken only in such proportion as is conducive to that end.

The above may suffice of the virtue of abstinence, and the vice contrary to it, which is gluttony, which I have here taken occasion to treat of, from the hunger our Lord Jesus and his disciples sustained, and the poorness of their small refection, who, for our example, both here and in the desert, began vigorously to oppose and fight against the sin of gluttony.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE JEWS, HAVING DRIVEN OUR LORD JESUS OUT OF THE CITY TO THE TOP OF A STEEP MOUNTAIN, ENDEAVOR TO THROW HIM DOWN THENCE

WHEN our Lord Jesus was again returned to the city of Nazareth, the Jews desired to see him work some miracles ; but our Lord showed them, by many reasons, how unworthy they were of such signs. Being vehemently enraged against him, they drove him out of the city ; and our most humble Lord, closely pursued, meekly fled before them. Their fury was so much increased and kindled against him, that they drove him to the top of a high mountain, that they might thence have an opportunity of throwing him down headlong. Our Lord Jesus, however, by the power of his sacred divinity, passed through the midst of them, and went his way ; for the time was not yet come in which he had chosen to die. Contemplate him here, devout reader, flying from his enemies, and hiding himself under a rock, to save himself from their fury ; compassionate him in his sufferings and endeavor to follow his steps, in the practice of humility and patience.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE MAN WITH A WITHERED HAND CURED BY OUR LORD JESUS

AS our Lord Jesus was teaching in the synagogue on one of the Sabbath-days, there was a certain man whose right hand was withered, whom our blessed Lord made stand in the midst of the doctors, and said to them, “Is it lawful or not to do good on the Sabbath day ?” But they made him no answer. He therefore said to the man: “Stretch forth thy hand,” and it was immediately restored.

Our divine Saviour was oftentimes pleased to work miracles on the Sabbath, to confound the perfidiousness of the Jews, who interpreted the law according to the letter ; which he would have to be observed according to the spirit. The law did not forbid the performance of good works : and acts of charity were not forbidden to be done on the Sabbath-day ; but the committing of sin, and servile works. They, however, pretending to be greatly scandalized, conspired against him, and said : “This man is not of God, for he keeps not the Sabbath !” Our Lord Jesus, notwithstanding, did not desist from working miracles on the Sabbath ; but rather performed them more frequently, on purpose to undeceive them, and convince them of their error. Consider him then, pious Christian, in the exercise of the above-mentioned good and charitable actions ; and according to his example, never omit the doing any good work on account of others being unjustly scandalized : for the fear of such scandal ought never to make us desist from those works, which are necessary for the salvation of a soul, or are helps to its spiritual advancement in perfection. Although it is true, in order to avoid giving scandal to our neighbor, according to the prescription of perfect charity, we should sometimes abstain from some temporary

satisfaction of the body rather than offend him. Wherefore the apostle to the Romans says : “ It is good not to eat flesh, and not to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother is offended, or scandalized, or made weak.” Rom. xiv.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES, AND HOW OUR LORD JESUS PROVIDES FOR THOSE WHO TRULY LOVE HIM

THE Holy Scripture tells us, that at two different times our Lord Jesus wrought the miracle of the multiplication of a few loaves, with which he not only fed, but fully satisfied many thousands of people. Do you, however, Christian reader, reduce them both to one meditation : and attentively consider the words and actions of Christ our Saviour, as they are related in the holy gospel. “ I have compassion,” saith he, “ on this multitude, because now three days they have continued with me. Neither have they what to eat, and if I dismiss them fasting to their homes, they will faint on

the way : for some of them came from afar off.” Mark viii. After which, he multiplied the loaves, and they all ate and were satisfied. If we duly consider these words, together with the miracle he performed, we shall find for our spiritual instruction, many good motives to love and praise his holy name : and more especially for that our Lord Jesus here showed himself to be most singularly good and merciful, most kind and courteous, most discreet and circumspect.

And first, that he was most merciful, appears in the words he spoke, saying, “I have compassion on the multitude.” Whereby it is plain, that it was his pure mercy alone that moved him to feed and satisfy them in their great hunger and necessity; for, as the royal prophet witnesseth, “All the earth is full of his mercy.” Ps. xxxii.

Secondly, he plainly showed his wonderful kindness and courtesy in the words which immediately follow : “ For lo,” saith he, “ now these three days they have continued with me, having nothing to eat.” Holding himself, as it were, obliged to them for remaining with him those three days, when indeed, on the contrary, it was for their own good and advantage, and not for his ; save only, that out of his endless bounty, his desire was, as he himself affirms in another place, to dwell with the sons of men, and be conversant with them for their salvation : for they that follow him by a good life, and are desirous to harken to his doctrine, and keep his commandments, he most singularly loves, and never withdraws his bountiful hand from them, but ever succors and relieves them in their necessities.

Thirdly, our blessed Lord showed his great discretion and circumspection, for seeing that many of the people were come to him from distant parts, and considering their necessities, and that it was dangerous to dismiss them again fasting, he said, “If I dismiss them fasting to their home they will faint in the way.” Consider how full of sweetness and heavenly comfort were these words. The same daily happens to us. For we have not of ourselves where with to sustain either body or soul, unless he pleases to give it us; and we should faint in our way, should he leave us to ourselves, for without him we cannot attain to any spiritual blessing, so that we have no reason to glory in ourselves when we experience any comfort in our spiritual exercises: since it is not our own, but all comes from him. And therefore, if we duly reflect, we shall find that the true servants of God, the more perfect they were in a holy life, the nearer to God, and the more excellently rich in the gifts of his divine grace, so much the more humble were they in their own eyes, attributing nothing to themselves but misery, wretchedness, and sin. For the nearer any one approaches to God, the more he is illuminated : and therefore more plainly discovers the great goodness and mercy of God, so that pride and vain-glory, which proceed from ignorance and spiritual blindness, can have no place or residence in his soul : for he can have no reason to be proud who truly knows God, and thoroughly examines into his own state. But to return ! It is certain, that we come from afar off when we come to God ; this I speak in regard to myself, and to such as are like to me, who have gone so far astray from God by the sins we have committed. Wherefore, whoever returns again to him may be

truly said to come a long way. But after Christ had spoken the above-mentioned words, he proceeded to deeds.

Behold him then, pious reader, how he takes the loaves in his hands, and having given thanks to God, gives them to his disciples to set before the multitude, and multiplied them in such a manner in their hands, that every one ate as much as he desired, and there still remained many baskets full of fragments. Consider likewise, how he looks on them while they eat, and is pleased in beholding the satisfaction they receive from this refecton. And they, at the same time, admiring the wonderfulness of this miracle, fed both their minds and bodies, rendering praise and thanksgiving to their benefactor, and with joy repeated to each other the wonderful works of his mercy. Whether the Blessed Virgin was present or not, the holy scripture makes no mention : do you, however, Christian reader, meditate on this subject, in the manner your devotion shall direct you, and God shall please to inspire.

CHAPTER XXXV

OUR LORD'S FLIGHT WHEN THEY WOULD HAVE MADE HIM KING : AND AGAINST WORLDLY HONORS IN GENERAL

WHEN our Lord had fed the multitude, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, they sought to make him king. For they considered that he was capable of supplying their wants, and therefore they wisely concluded that they could not be in want of anything under such a king. But our Lord Jesus, knowing their design, fled imperceptibly from them to the mountains, so that they could not find him. Christ then would not accept temporal honors. And observe how truly and unfeignedly he labors to shun them ; he sends his disciples by sea, and goes himself up to the mountains, that, if they should persist in searching for him, as they would probably do, by following his disciples, they might look for him in vain among them. The disciples, indeed, would not have left our Lord, but that he compelled them to do so. It was undoubtedly a pious disposition in them to desire to remain with Christ : but more pious yet to leave him for a time out of obedience to his will. Observe then and meditate with what inward regret they depart from him, but not till he urges them to it, by signifying it to be his divine pleasure ; after which they comply, and to show their humility and entire submission to his commands, go on board the vessel without him, however perilous and grievous it be to them. Thus does Christ act daily with us in a spiritual manner ; by our own good-will we would never have Christ absent from us, but his pleasure is otherwise ; he comes into our souls, and is absent, at times, when he pleases, but always for our good. Hear what St.

Bernard says upon this subject: “ After the divine spouse has been sought for with continued vigils and prayers, and copious floods of tears, when he seems to be within reach of his pursuing spouse, he again escapes ; and again coming up to his weeping pursuer, suffers himself to be taken, but not retained, flying as it were from her arms in the very minute when she embraces him ; yet if the faithful soul devoutly persists in her pursuit of him with prayers and tears, he will again, at length, return to her, and, ‘not disappoint her of the wish of her lips.’ Psal. xx. But again will he disappear, and remain unseen, till again he be sought after with the whole affection. Thus while the soul is confined to this mortal body, it has frequently the joy of its spouse’s presence : but that joy is not complete, since, though his visitations rejoice her frequently, the frequent vicissitudes of absence give her equal pain. And this the beloved must endure, till, having thrown off her corporal burden, she shall be able to fly, raised on the pinions of her wishes, wafted over the plains of contemplation, and rapidly following her heavenly spouse whithersoever he goes. Neither shall every soul attain to this, but such only as by extraordinary devotion, vehement desire, and tender affection, proves herself a true spouse of Christ, and worthy that, taking upon him the form of a spouse, he should visit her in the nuptial ornaments of his grace.” And elsewhere the same saint says, “Perhaps he therefore withdrew himself, that he might be recalled the more earnestly, and the more ardently retained. For thus lie once feigned to be going farther, not that lie intended to do so much, as to be invited to stay, with that tender solicitation, ‘ Stay with us, for it is growing late in the evening.’ ‘ Luke xxiv. And immediately he adds, “ This kind of pious feint, or rather salutary dispensation of Providence, which the incorporeal word corporally expressed to the body, the spirit frequently, in a special manner peculiar to itself, makes use of to exercise a truly devout soul. Passing by, he means to be stopt : going away he is willing to be recalled : his departure is a dispensation of Providence : his return is ever the purpose of his will ; and both are the effects of infinite wisdom, the great ends of which he alone can fathom.

“ Experience shows that the soul is frequently exercised with these vicissitudes of the absence and presence of the divine word, and he himself spoke as much : ‘I go and I return to you.’ John xiv. And likewise, ‘ A little while you shall not see me, and again a little while and you shall see me.’

Ibid. Oh, the little while, and no little while ! Oh the short space, and tediously long duration ! Beloved Lord, do you call it a little while when we are not to see you ? With humblest submission to your sacred words, Lord, it is a long, a tediously long, and heavy age to lose sight of you but for an instant. Yet both are true in different sense. An age of your absence is but a little while, if our merit only be considered ; but if compared to our wishes, every moment is a tedious age. This the prophet hints at, saying, ‘ If he should delay, wait for him : because he will come and not tarry.’ Hob. xi. How will he not tarry, if he should delay coming : unless it be that his coming will be expeditious with respect to our deserts, though slow with regard to our desires ? Now the amorous soul is wafted by desire, and drawn on by affection, overlooks its merits, shuts its eyes to dazzling majesty, opens them to spiritual joy, fixes its hope in salvation, and In that confidently proceeds. Made intrepid at length by hope, she boldly recalls the divine word, and confidently invites the object of her delight, calling him with unusual liberty, not her Lord, but her beloved spouse. ‘ Return, my beloved, return.’ “ Cantic. 1. And in another place, the same saint says, “ God never ceases to exercise with such vicissitudes those who lead a spiritual life, or rather those whom he intends to lift to spirituality ; visiting them betimes, and early proving them.” Thus far St Bernard.

You have seen then, gentle reader, how our Lord Jesus alternately visits the soul, and departs from it in a spiritual sense ; and how the soul ought to behave under either circumstance. She must earnestly and fervently solicit his return, yet patiently bear his absence, after the example of his disciples, who, out of obedience, enter the vessel without him, and bear up against the storms that threaten, with hopes of his succor to deliver them. But now let us return to our Lord Jesus. When the disciples had put off to sea, he went up alone to the mountains, and thus escaped the hands of them who sought him. You see with what care and study our Lord fled from the honor of a worldly crown. And what did he this for but to set an example for you to follow ? His flight then was not so much for his own sake as for ours. For he well knew what rashness the ambition of worldly honors must hurry us into. For such honors are the greatest snare, that can be laid to entangle us, and the strongest battery that can be planted for the subversion of our souls, whether it consists in the possession of power, ecclesiastic or secular, of authority, or learning. For it is almost impossible for men to delight in

honors, without standing in imminent clanger, and tottering, as it were, on the brink of a steep precipice : nay, rather should I say, without already rolling down, and that for many reasons. First, [because the mind that is once delighted with honors is wholly engrossed by them, and thinks of nothing but preserving and improving them ; and St. Gregory, in his 30th Homily, observes, “that every one is so much the more alienated from the love of the Supreme Being, as he is delighted with inferior objects.”

Secondly, because he is quite taken up with procuring a multitude of friends, acquaintances, and correspondents, by whose means and assistance he may add to his honors, and consequently must comply with many things incompatible with conscience and God’s pleasure, out of mere complaisance to them, from whose friendship he expects such advantages. Thirdly, he envies those who are possessed of the honors he covets, and generally detracts from their merit, and thus falls into envy and scandal. Fourthly, he thinks himself, and would have others esteem him worthy of honors, and thus becomes vain and arrogant: when, according to the Apostle, “He who thinks himself something, when he is really nothing, deceives himself.”- 00& vi. And therefore Christ says, “When you have done all things well, say, we are useless servants.” Luke xvii. But when does an ambitious man say this ? Fifthly, he walks not according to the spirit, but according to the flesh ; and has not his heart raised and united to heaven, but leaves it loose and dissipated with a variety of earthly objects. And sixthly, when once a man suffers in himself a relish of ambition for honors, he is so allured by them as never to be satiated, but daily hankering after new ones, the more he obtains, the more he desires to obtain, because he vainly conceits himself to be as honorable and worthy in the esteem of others, as he is in his own. Thus does he deliver himself up a prey to ambition, the worst of vices, and the mother of many. But to convince you of the malice of this vice, let St. Bernard speak for me. “Ambition,” says he, “ is a subtle evil, a secret poison, a hidden pestilence, the author of all guile, the mother of all hypocrisy, the monster-getting parent of rancour, the moth of all virtues, the cancer worm of sanctity, the hardener of hearts, creating diseases from their cures, engendering sickness from medicines, and destroying all whom it basely supplants, as a concealed enemy undermines a city, to involve its inhabitants in its ruins. And what nourishes this dangerous vermin but the dissipation of the mind, and the forgetfulness of

truth ? And what discovers this lurking traitor, and unkennels this worker of darkness, but the light of truth ? Such is that truth which says, ‘ What does it avail a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Matt. Xvi. And again, ‘ The powerful shall suffer powerful torments.’ Wisd. vi. It is this same truth that makes a man reflect, how trivial is the comfort in ambition, grievous the judgment attending it, how brief its enjoyment, and how obscure its end. And therefore the third temptation, which Satan tried our Lord with, was ambition, when he proffered him all the kingdoms of the earth, if he would fall down and adore him. You see then, that ambition is the worship of the devil, for which he promises his adorers in recompense, to lead them to worldly honors and glory.” In another place the saint says, “We are fond indeed of rising, and covet to be exalted. For we are by nature noble creatures, and of a certain greatness of soul, and therefore it is natural in us to wish to be elevated. Yet woe to us if we follow him, who says, ‘ I will sit on the mount of the testament, in the skirts of the north.’ Isaiah xiv. O wretch ! in the skirts of the north ! that is too frigid a mount ; however you may covet power and eminence, we will not follow you thither. Yet how many to this very day follow your foul and fatal steps, nay, how few escape being enslaved by the lust of power ! Oh, unhappy creatures, whom do you thus follow ? Who is your guide ? Is not this the mount to which the angel ascended, and fell a devil ? Are you not aware that after his fall, tortured with envy, and wickedly anxious to supplant mankind, he showed them a like eminence, telling them, ‘You shall be like Gods, knowing good and evil.’” Gen. iii. And a little after the saint adds, “ Such the power of ambition, that it can rob an Angel of angelic felicity. So the ambition of knowledge stripped man of the glory of immortality. If a man try to ascend the steps of power, how many opponents, think you, will he meet with, how many repulses, and how difficult a road will he find ? And suppose he should attain the summit of his wishes, what has he gained? ‘The powerful shall be powerfully tormented.’ Wisd. vi. So that it is needless to enter into a detail at present of the solitudes and anxieties which power produces. One ambitious of useless knowledge, what labor must he not go through, what anxiety of spirit, and still shall hear, though thou burst thyself, thou shalt not overtake it. His heart shall be bathed in bitterness, as often as he sees one whom he thinks himself inferior to, or fancies that others do. What if he swells himself with conceit ? ‘ I will destroy,’ says the Lord, ‘ the

wisdom of the wise, and reprove the prudence of the prudent.' 1 Cor. i. But I shall say no more, as you have seen, I fancy, how much the height of ambition, and the thirst of knowledge and power, is to be shunned by such as are any ways terrified at the fall of one angel, and the ruin of man. 'Mountains of Gelboe, neither snow nor rain shall fall upon you.' Yet what shall we do ? It behooves us to ascend ; we are born, and imbibed with a desire of elevation : who then shall teach us a salutary ascent ! Who but he who tells us, that he who is descended, he likewise is ascended ? It is to him we are to apply to learn the right ascent, that we may not follow the footsteps of that evil guide, or rather seducer. For seeing that no one ascended, he, the Most High, descended ; and by his descent, secured to us an easy and safe ascent. He descended from the mount of power, in suffering himself to be encircled with the infirmities of the flesh ; he descended from the mount of science, in the simplicity of his preaching, to save all such as should sincerely believe. In reality, what can seem weaker than the little tender body and limbs of an infant? What more void of science than a child ? Who less powerful than one whose limbs are nailed to a tree, and whose very bones are enumerated ? And who would be thought less wise than one who should voluntarily part with his life, and make satisfaction for damages he had not committed ? Thus you see how much he who descended, lessened and lowered himself beneath worldly power and wisdom. Nor could he ascend higher than he did in charity and goodness. But where is the wonder that Christ should climb by descending, when we have seen men and angels precipitated by attempting to rise." The same saint elsewhere says, "Oh, the perverse ambition of the sons of Adam ! Though it be a laborious task to ascend, and an easy matter to descend, they climb with levity, and descend with difficulty ; prone to honors, and even to ecclesiastical dignities, a weight too formidable for the very strength of an angel. But to follow you, dear Jesus, no one is ready: and few can be dragged, much less led by your precepts." Thus far St. Bernard. From what has been said, you may gather, gentle reader, how much it behooves you to fly worldly and false honor, and how certain it is, that true honor is to be attained only by humility.

But if some should flatter themselves with the specious but vain pretext that their love and ambition for learning and honors are but for rendering themselves more serviceable to their neighbors in the affairs of their

salvation! St. Bernard will answer them : “Oh ! that they who have thus ambitiously seized those honors, would but use them with a fidelity equal to the confidence with which they thrust themselves into them !” But I wish it may not prove impracticable to gather the sweet fruits of charity from the bitter plant of ambition. Now to have that thorough contempt for honors which they really deserve, requires more than an ordinary share of the sublimest virtue. St. John Chrysostom observes, “ to be in the midst of honors, and make a right use of them, is like a man conversing with a very beautiful young creature, and making a law to himself, never to cast a loose look on her. A man therefore undoubtedly stands in need of the greatest fortitude of mind to make a proper, and none but a proper use of the power and honors conferred upon him.

CHAPTER XXXVI

OUR LORD PRAYS UPON THE MOUNT ; AND, DESCENDING, WALKS ON THE WATERS : SOME REFLECTIONS ON PRAYER

AFTER the disciples had gone on board, and set sail, our Lord went up a high mountain, and remained there till the fourth watch of the night, in fervent prayer to his eternal Father. Whence you see that our Lord frequently spent his time in prayer, and often the whole or the best part of the night. Behold him then in this devout exercise, how he humbles himself before his divine Father, and like a good shepherd, solicits for us his flock ; and this in a state of mortification, of watching, and retirement. And why principally does he do this, but to set us an example of prayer, as he elsewhere recommended it to his disciples both by word and example. 1 John ii. He told them, It is necessary to pray, and never cease : proposing to them the examples of the judge and the widow as related in Luke xviii., to exhort them to confidence in prayer and to perseverance in importuning ; to which he added another example, of the friend who lent the loaves to his friend, merely to avoid being any longer solicited. And all this was purposely meant to inculcate on us the virtue of prayer. And indeed, it is a virtue of the greatest importance towards obtaining all that is useful, and removing all that is hurtful to us.

Would you obtain patience to bear up against adversities, be assiduous in prayer. Would you obtain strength to overcome trials and temptations, be assiduous in prayer. Would you become acquainted with the subtle deceits of Satan in order to avoid them, would you cheerfully persist in the service

of God, and tread the paths of mortification and affliction for his sake ; would you renounce all carnal desires, and wholly betake yourself -to a spiritual life, be assiduous in prayer. If you wish to destroy evil thoughts, be a man of prayer. If you are desirous to enrich your mind with holy reflections, and your heart with virtuous, fervent, and pious desires, be a man of prayer. If you are willing to strengthen your good purposes with manly resolution and steady perseverance, be a man of prayer. In a word, whether you mean to extirpate vice from, or implant virtue in your breast, make prayer your constant study. For it is by prayer you receive the unction of the Holy Ghost, who instructs the mind in all things. It lifts a man to contemplation, and brings the soul to the embraces of her heavenly spouse. Such is the power and efficacy of prayer. In confirmation of which, without recurring to any of the numerous testimonies in holy writ, it is sufficient to recollect the many ignorant and illiterate persons who by prayer have obtained, and still daily obtain these fruits. Wherefore it highly concerns all, if they mean to be Christians, to give themselves up to the exercise of prayer, but this is more especially incumbent on persons in a religious state, who are supposed to have more leisure.

To this, gentle reader, I strongly exhort you : make it the principal business of life, after the necessary occupations of your state are complied with, to attend to prayer. Let it be your delight ; and take pleasure in nothing so much as in conversing with God : which is done by prayer. But, that you may have the advice of a more able counsellor than I am, to determine you, hear what St. Bernard says on the subject : “They,” says he, “who make prayer their frequent study, are sensible of what I say. Often times we approach the holy altar with a coldness of devotion, and kneel down to prayer with a frowardness of heart ; but, persisting in it, we suddenly feel ourselves replenished with grace, the breast is nourished with the heavenly aliment, and the whole interior expands to the inundation of piety.” And again in another place he says’ : “ As often as I talk of prayer, methinks something inwardly says to me, whence is it that of all who persist in prayer, there are so few who are sensible of its fruits ? We seem to return from it just as we went to it ; no one gives us any answer, or makes us any grant. But follow not your own experience ; rather let faith direct you : for faith is ever true, but experience often otherwise. Now does not the truth of faith tell us by the mouth of Christ, ‘ Whatever ye ask praying, believe that

ye shall receive, and it shall be done unto you.’ Mark ii. Let none of you then, brethren, despise or think lightly of his own prayer ; for he to whom we pray does not. Scarce has our prayer gained utterance, when it is recorded by him ; and one of the two we may infallibly depend on, that he either will grant what we ask, or what is more useful. We ourselves are ignorant what it most behooves us to ask ; but God compassionates our ignorance, and still receives our prayer, so as to grant us what is better for us, instead of the useless or pernicious favors we solicit. So that prayer is never barren, provided it be made with the requisite condition mentioned by the Psalmist, that is, delight in God. * Delight in the Lord, and he will grant you the petitions of your heart.’ “ Ps xxxvi. A little farther on he adds, “Observe that such are called the petitions of the heart, which reason dictates as judicious ones. Neither have you cause to complain, but rather to return God thanks with sentiments of the utmost gratitude, since such is the great care he takes of you, that when you ask what is useless, or perhaps detrimental to you, he grants you something better in the stead of it : like a tender parent, who gives a child bread when he asks it, but gives him not a knife for asking. You are to take notice, that the petitions of your heart are wholly contained under these three heads, nor can I see aught which a good man can covet that is not included in them, namely, the goods in this life, which are those of the body and those of the soul, and are two of the three heads ; the third is the beatitude of eternity. Wonder not that I include the goods of the body among the blessings which we are to ask of God ; for corporal gifts are no less his than those of the spirit, and therefore are to be asked of him, as far as is necessary or conducive to the spiritual ; for example, we may, nay ought to ask and hope for the necessary support, to enable us to serve God. But our greatest solicitude, our most fervent and pious importunity, ought to be for obtaining virtue, and the grace of God for our souls in this life, and glory in the next, where both body and soul will be crowned with complete felicity.” And a little farther he says, “ Let prayer then for temporals be confined to absolute necessities: let prayer for the spiritual profit of the soul be free from all impurity, and directed wholly to the divine pleasure : but let prayer for eternal happiness, with nil due regard to humility, be bold and daring, with presumption on God’s mercy alone.” “He that would pray apart, and with fruit,” says the same saint, “ must choose not only his place, but his time. The time of fasting is certainly the

fittest, especially when the night hushes nature into a profound silence, for then prayer will be both purer and more free. Rise, according to the prophet Jeremiah, ‘ Rise in the night, in the beginning of your vigils, and pour out your soul like water in the presence of the Lord your God.’ Lam. ii. How securely does prayer ascend by night, when no witnesses are by but God and his angel, who presents it at the altar of Heaven ! How grateful and pleasing does modest secrecy make it appear in the eyes of the Almighty ! How serene and undisturbed does it reach his ears, when removed from noise and hurry ! And finally, how pure and sincere must it be when unsullied with worldly solitudes, and not tempted by public applause and flattery ? It was for this reason that the spouse in the Canticles retreated to the privacy of her bed-chamber, and to the stillness of the night, to seek her spouse, the divine word, that is, to pray. For in reality they are one and the same thing. Since, otherwise, you cannot be properly said to pray, if in your prayers you seek aught beside the divine word, or on his account, for he contains all you can seek. In him are the remedies for all diseases, supplies for all necessities, helps for all defects, and variety of perfection. In him, in short, you may find whatever is necessary, fit, or useful. It is needless and useless, therefore, to ask anything besides the divine word, who himself contains all things. For even if we should, when necessity requires, ask of God any temporal favors, provided we ask them as we ought, for the sake of the divine word, we cannot so much be said to ask the temporals as the word, for whose sake we asked them.” Thus far St. Bernard.

Here, gentle reader, you have the beautiful sentiments of St. Bernard, a man endowed with a sublime contemplative genius, a fervent spirit of prayer, and a refined taste for spiritual pleasures. Reflect on his words, that you may take pleasure in them ; it is for this purpose that I quote them so frequently, for they are not only full of spirit, but highly eloquent and pathetically moving to the service of God. He was a man equally eminent for wisdom and sanctity ; endeavor, therefore, to imitate him by putting in practice the pious counsels he gives. By this means will I accomplish the purpose I had in view in referring to him so often. But let us return to our Lord Jesus.

While our Lord was praying on the mount, the disciples were at sea in the greatest dismay and affliction, the wind being contrary, and the vessel harassed with tempestuous weather. Behold, then, and compassionate them

amidst this severe tribulation. They are attacked by a storm, in a dark night, and without their Lord. A severe trial indeed ! At the fourth hour of the night, our Lord descended from the mount, and walking on the waves, came up to them. Contemplate here our Lord, who, fatigued with long watching and praying, descends barefooted from this steep and perhaps craggy mountain, and walks upon the water as on dry land ! Thus the watery element knew and confessed its Creator. When he drew near to the ship, his disciples saw him, and taking him to be a shadow or spectre, screamed out : but our gracious Lord, unwilling to terrify or afflict them any longer, said to them, “ I am here, be not afraid.” Matt. xiv. Then Peter, confident of the Lord’s power, began, with his leave, to walk likewise on the waters ; but desponding, was about to sink, when our Lord stretched forth his right hand, and saved him from sinking. The gloss upon this place tells us, that our Lord made him walk on the waters, to give him proof of his divine power ; and suffered him to sink, in order to remind him of his weakness, and not proudly to presume himself on an equality with him.

Our Lord afterwards entered the vessel, the storm ceased, and serenity ensued. The disciples received him with reverence, rejoiced, and felt more perfect tranquillity than before. Contemplate him and his disciples in every one of these passages, which are rich in matter of devotion. You may likewise draw from them the moral reflection, that our Lord frequently does the same with us in a spiritual sense, suffering his beloved to be inwardly or outwardly afflicted in this world, “because he scourges every child whom he accepts.” Neb. xii. “For they,” the Apostle adds, “who are out of discipline, are not legitimate children, but bastards.” It is necessary, therefore, for us to undergo trials and afflictions in this life ; because from them we gain knowledge and acquire virtue, and learn to keep them when acquired ; and what is more, we build all our hopes on them of future and eternal rewards. For which reason we ought not to repine and be impatient under them, but to love and cherish them. But because the advantage of tribulation is great, and yet unknown to many, we therefore look upon them as difficult, nay, insupportable. Therefore, gentle reader, that you may be instructed to bear them as you ought, I will, according to my custom, bring you the authority of St. Bernard. “ Tribulation,” says he, “ is useful, it works a trial, and leads to glory. ‘ I am with him,’ says the Lord, ‘ in tribulation.’ Let us give thanks then to the Father of mercies, who is with us

in tribulations, and consoles us in every affliction. For, as I said, tribulation is a necessary good, which is changed into glory, and terminates in joy : a long, an ample, a plenary joy, which no one shall snatch from us. Tribulation is necessary ; and this necessity brings forth our crown. Let us not despise this seed brethren ; it is a small one indeed, but great in the fruits it is big with. Grant it to be tasteless, grant it to be bitter, even grant it to be a grain of mustard. Let us not look upon the outside, but upon what is contained in it. What you behold of it is temporal, the rest which you cannot see, eternal.” And lower down, he says : “ ‘ I am with him in tribulation,’ saith the Lord, ‘ and I shall require no other merit than tribulation.’ How good then is it to adhere to God. I will do so then, and over place all my confidence in him, for that h^e says, “ I am with him in tribulation ; I will free him and glorify him.’ Ps. xc. ; My delight,” says he, “is to be with the children of men.’ He came upon earth to be with those who are sad at heart, and to be with us in our tribulations. But there shall come a time when we ourselves shall be lifted to meet Christ in the air, and thence to remain forever with our divine Lord, provided we, in the meantime, endeavor to have him with us here. O Lord, it is good for me to be troubled, so thou be but with me. Nay, infinitely better is it than banqueting or triumphing without thee. The furnace tries the potter’s vessels ; and tribulation tries the just. What are we afraid of? Why do we despond ? Wherefore do we fly the furnace ? Does the fire rage ? No matter ; the Lord is with us in tribulation. If God is with us, who dare be against us? What does it import who it is? If he has but hold, who shall make him quit his hold ? Lastly ; if he glorifies, who has power to humble?” “Let us not, then,” says the same saint, “glory in hope alone, but even in tribulation. ‘ I will gladly glory in my weakness, that the strength of Christ may dwell within me,’ says St. Paul. 2 Cor. xii. O desirable weakness which is rewarded with the strength of Christ ! Ah, who will give me not only to be weak, but even to faint, and be lost to myself, so I be but strong in force of the Lord of forces. For strength is perfected by weakness, and virtue gathers force from infirmity, as the same Apostle says.” And again ; “ when I am weakened then I grow strong.” “It is for this reason,” adds St. Bernard elsewhere, “ that the spouse in the Canticles calls her beloved not a bundle, but a little bundle ; for that love makes every burden light, and every grievance portable. Well might she call him little, for ‘a little one was born to us:’ But more especially for that ‘ the sufferings

of this world are not to be compared to the future glory which will be revealed in us,' if we credit St. Paul. Rom. Vii. 'For our present momentary light tribulation will, on high, work in us an eternal weight of glory beyond measure,' as the same Apostle says. 2 Cor. Iii. And that will one day be a heap of glory to us which is now but a little bundle of bitterness. And may it not truly be called a little bundle, since Christ himself tells us, that his yoke is sweet and his burden light? Not that it is light in itself; for the bitterness of death is a severe and dreadful trial, if it be considered only on his own account, yet love makes it seem light and easy."

The same saint elsewhere says, "If we cast an eye over the whole Church, we may easily observe, that the spiritual members of it are much more combatted than the carnal. This is the craft of pride, envy and malice, always to disturb the most perfect : according to the words of the prophet, 'his food is of the chosen sort.' Abac. i. Nay, it is the dispensation of Divine Provide.'ice that it should be so ; not suffering the weak to be tried beyond their strength, but drawing even advantage from temptation ; while the more perfect but increase the number and glory of their triumphs over their enemy, in every fresh trial they undergo. With much more eagerness and warmth the adversary struggles to defeat the Church's right wing rather than her left ; not laboring so much to defeat the main body of their forces immediately, as in directly to weaken it by wasting its very soul." "Now," adds the saint, "there all our resistance is required, where necessity urges most, where the weight of war hangs heaviest, where the battle is the warmest, and the combat most pressing."

Again he adds : "This is the great grace of God to his Church ; this his mercy toward his servants ; this his regard for his elect, that covering her left wing to spare and connive at its weakness, he heads and supports her right ; hence the prophet, in the person of the Church, says : * I took care to have the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be moved.' : Ps. xv. And again: "O good Jesus! be thou always on my right ; take hold of my right hand, for I know that no adversary can affect me, if no iniquity sways me. Let my left be harassed and mutilated ; let it be as sailed with injuries and aggravated with insults : I willingly sacrifice it, so I be under your custody and protection, so that you stand at my right hand."

And elsewhere, "It is one thing," says he, "to be actuated by virtue, another to be ruled by wisdom : it is one thing to be absolute in virtue,

another to be delighted in sweetness. For though wisdom be powerful and virtue sweet, yet, to give words their true meaning, vigor belongs properly to virtue ; and serenity of soul, with a kind of spiritual sweetness, is the certain mark of wisdom. And this I believe the apostle meant, when after many fine counsels relating to virtue, he adds, ‘ that wisdom consists in sweetness in the Holy Spirit.’ To resist then, to repel force with force, which are properties strictly belonging to virtue, are undoubtedly attended with real honor : but that honor a very laborious one. For there is a great difference between the painful defence of their honor and the quiet possession of it. In short, to be actuated by virtue, and to be in full enjoyment of virtue, are two things. Whatever virtue produces, wisdom enjoys: and what wisdom disposes and resolves, virtue moderates, and puts in practice. ‘ Write wisdom in your leisure,’ says the wise man. Eccles. xxxviii. The leisure then of wisdom is business ; and the more wisdom is at leisure, the more active it is in its proper sphere. On the other side, virtue shines the brighter for exercise : and to be properly active, is the proof of virtue. So that if any one should define wisdom to be the love of virtue, I cannot see how he would be wrong. For where there is love, labor becomes sweetness, and therefore, perhaps, wisdom, which in Latin is sapientia, takes its etymology from sapor, relish, as a kind of quality or ingredient added to virtue, which gives a relish to that which would otherwise be merely tasteless and insipid. Nor should I think it amiss to define wisdom, the relish of good. It belongs then to virtue,” adds the saint, “ to bear troubles with fortitude ; but to wisdom, the rejoicing in tribulations. To comfort your heart and sustain the Lord, is the part of virtue ; but to taste and see that the Lord is sweet, is that of wisdom. And that the properties of both may the better appear from nature itself, let it suffice to observe, that modesty of mind is a certain proof of wisdom, as constancy is of virtue. And right it is that wisdom should follow virtue, since virtue is a kind of solid foundation on which wisdom raises the superstructure.”

In another place, he says, “Happy the man who directs the sufferings and passions with a view of justice, so as to bear all he suffers for the Son of God, without complaining at heart, but with praise and thanksgiving. He who carries himself thus, properly takes up his bed and walks. Our bed is our body, in which before we were languishing, subservient to our unruly desires and lawless appetites. We then take up this bed when we compel it

to obey the spirit.” “The spirit,” says the same saint, “is truly manifold which inspires, so many different ways, the children of men in such a manner, that no one can abscond, or screen himself from its heat. Inasmuch that it is given them for their use, for miracles, for salvation, for help, for comfort, and for fervor in devotion. For the use of life it is given to the good and bad ; and yields alike to the worthy and the unworthy abundance of advantages, without any limits prefixed to it : and therefore he would be highly ungrateful, who should deny or not acknowledge these benefits of the spirit. It is given for miracles, in the many signs, prodigies, and wondrous virtues it operates by the hands of some. It was the spirit operated so many marvellous works in antiquity, and which confirms our faith in old miracles, by the daily new ones it manifests to us. But as the gift of miracles is not always useful to the operator of them, therefore the spirit is likewise given to salvation, as when, with all our heart, we turn to the Lord our God. It is given for help, when, in the midst of our struggles with trials of trouble, it assists our weakness. And, when the spirit gives testimony to our spirit that we are the children of God, that inspiration is given us for our comfort. Finally, the spirit is given for fervor, when breathing strongly into the hearts of the perfect, it kindles a powerful flame of divine charity, by the means of which, in the hope of the children of God, we glory in tribulations, deem scandal an honor to us, rejoice in the injuries done us, and are transported with pleasure when loaded with contempt. To all of us then the spirit is given for salvation, but not alike for fervor. There are but few replenished with this spirit ; but very few, who covet and pursue it. We are content with our own narrowness ; and neither labor to breathe the breath of liberty, nor even so much as aspire to it.” Thus far St. Bernard.

You have seen then, gentle reader, the many and beautiful reasons which the saint gives, to show how necessary afflictions are for us. Wonder not, then, that our Saviour should suffer his disciples, whom he loved so tenderly, to be harassed with tempests, tears, and afflictions, since you see the great usefulness of them. We frequently read of their being agitated with storms and contrary winds, but never read of their being once shipwrecked. Which ought to serve you as a lesson to stand firm, patient and cheerful, amidst the contradictions and trials you may meet with : and so to exercise yourself in the practice of the spirit, as, filled with its fervor, to covet

sufferings for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, who chose this way for himself and his followers, and was the first to tread it before us.

CHAPTER XXXVII

CHRIST RELIEVES THE DAUGHTER OF THE WOMAN OF CANAAN, WHO WAS POSSESSED WITH THE DEVIL : AND HOW OUR ANGEL GUARDIANS FAITHFULLY ASSIST US

AS our Lord Jesus was going about exercising in the most laborious manner the functions of preaching, and curing the infirm, there came to him a woman of Canaan, of the race of the Gentiles, beseeching him to heal her daughter, who was possessed with the devil. This woman's faith was so great, that she firmly believed, and without hesitation, that he could do it. Notwithstanding our Lord at first made her no answer, she persisted, and continued to cry out, and to beg of him to have mercy on her : insomuch, that his disciples, compassionating her cries, earnestly entreated him in her behalf. And, when our Lord at length made answer, that "it was not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to the dogs;" she, with profound humility, replied, "that the dogs also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." Wherefore, she was thought worthy to be heard, and was granted what she petitioned for.

Consider here our Lord Jesus and his disciples, and have recourse to the general heads of meditation, as I have before prescribed to you. Reflect, however, at the same time, on the virtues of this woman, and endeavor to profit by them, which were chiefly three. The first was, her great faith, which even extended to her daughter, and for which she was praised by our Lord. The second was, her persevering prayer ; for she was not only

persevering but importunate : which importunity is also acceptable to God, as I have before showed you. The third was, her profound humility ; for she neither denied herself to be included in the comparison which our Lord made, nor thought herself worthy to be reckoned among his children, or to have the bread itself, but was content to receive the crumbs alone. She greatly humbled herself, and therefore obtained what she sought for. The same will happen to you if, with a sincere, pure, and faithful mind, persevering in prayer, you humble yourself before God, esteeming yourself unworthy to receive any good from him, you may then assuredly expect to obtain what you ask for. And as the apostles interceded for the Cananean woman, so will your angel guardian intercede for you, and offer up your prayers to the Almighty. Upon this head hear St. Bernard : . “ Often when my soul has been sighing, praying, and tormenting itself with anxiety for its heavenly spouse, and that the dearly desired, and so much sought after, has, in his own mercy, condescended to meet her, I thought she might, from her own experience, repeat that sentence of Jeremiah : ‘ Thou art good, O Lord, to such as hope in thee, to the soul which seeks thee.’ The very angel who accompanies our heavenly spouse, is the previous minister of the secret salutation ; with what joy, with what delight, with what transport, turning to our Lord, does he say : ‘ I render thanks to thee, O Lord of Majesty ; because thou hast given him his heart’ s desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips.’ Ps. xx. He it is who sedulously, and in every place, as a constant pursuer of the soul, never ceases to admonish it by continual suggestions, saying :

‘ Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee the desires of thy heart.’ And again: ‘Wait on the Lord, and keep his ways. Though he tarry, wait for him, because he will surely come, he will not tarry.’ Hob. ii. And to the Lord he says : ‘As the heart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after thee, O God.’ Ps. xli, ‘He hath desired thee in the night, and thy spirit in the inmost recess of his heart. From the morning he hath watched unto thee.’ And again : ‘The whole day he hath stretched out his hands unto thee. Dismiss him. for he crieth after thee. Return, O Lord, and vouchsafe to give ear. Look down from Heaven and behold and visit the forsaken.’ The faithful paranymp, who is conscious, without envy, of the natural love between the soul and her spouse, seeks not anything for himself, but only the glory of his Lord. He passeth mutually between the

heavenly spouse and his beloved, offering her vows, and bringing his gifts, exciting her to love, and moving him to mercy. Sometimes also, though seldom, he renders them present to himself ; either attracting her, or inviting him, for he is familiarly known in the sacred mansion of Heaven, nor fears a repulse, as he sees daily the face of the heavenly Father.” Thus far St. Bernard,

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE PHARISEES, AND OTHERS, SCANDALIZED AT THE WORDS OF OUR LORD JESUS

WE ought never to wonder that some take occasion of scandal at our words and actions, though they be ever so good and perfect; seeing that this often befell our Lord himself, who could not err in word or deed. For it happened at a certain time that the Pharisees asked our Lord, why his disciples did not wash their hands before they ate? Our Lord answered and reproved them for having more regard to the outward cleanliness of the body, than the inward purity of the soul. At which answer they were scandalized; but our Lord regarded them not.

At another time, as he was teaching in the synagogue, some of his disciples, being too worldlyminded, did not understand him, and went away. But to his chosen twelve he said, “Will ye also go away?” Peter, in the name of the rest, answered: ‘ To whom shall we go \ Thou hast the words of eternal life.” Consider him in these and the like things ; how he speaks with authority, and teaches with true doctrine, having no regard to the scandal of the weak and simple : wherefore we must observe, first, that we are not to depart from the virtue of justice on account of another being scandalized. Secondly, that we ought to be more careful for the inward purity of our hearts, than solicitous for the outward cleanliness of the body, which our Lord, in another place, more expressly recommends, saying, in St. Luke, that “we must live according to the spirit:” so that the words of our Redeemer should not seem strange to us, as they did to those disciples who, when he said in St. John, “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of

Man,” etc, could not bear to hear them ; and therefore, being scandalized, departed from him, but we should rather acknowledge them to be the words of eternal life ; that, together with the twelve that remained with him, we may endeavor perfectly to imitate him.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE REWARD PROMISED BY OUR LORD JESUS TO THOSE WHO FORSAKE ALL FOR HIM

ST. PETER, the prudent and faithful disciple of our Lord, on a certain occasion asked him, in the name of the rest of his brethren the apostles, what reward they should have who had quitted the world, and all things in it, for the love of him. Our Lord, amongst other things, answered, “That they who should forsake all worldly things to follow him, should receive a reward of a hundred-fold in this world, and life everlasting in the next.” Consider well the greatness of this reward, exult with the utmost joy, and render praise and thanksgiving to God, who has placed thee in a state to negotiate so advantageously for thyself as to be able to gain a hundred for one, and, withal, eternal life. This hundred-fold, however, is not to be understood of temporal things, but of spiritual ones only ; that is, of inward consolation, and heavenly virtues, which we shall prove by experience, and not acquire by knowledge. For when the soul begins to have a true relish for the virtues of poverty, charity, patience, and other Christian perfections, and takes pleasure and delight in the constant practice of them, may it not be truly said of her, that she has received a hundred-fold ? And if at length she still rises to more sublime degrees of perfection, so as frequently to partake of the inward visits of her divine and heavenly spouse, may it not be again affirmed with truth, that she has received a thousand fold for all, whatever it may be, that she has given up for his sake ? You see then the veracity of the words which were uttered by Eternal Truth, who never fails even in this world, to reward the soul that is truly devoted to him with an hundred-fold,

and this not once, but frequently ; affecting it often with so deep a sense of his divine love as to make it esteem as the merest dirt everything it has forsaken, and the whole world itself, for the sake of obtaining possession of its divine and heavenly spouse. But that you maybe more amply instructed in relation to this hundred fold gift of the gospel, and may reap more benefit from it, hear what St. Bernard says on that head: “If anyone,” says he, “should say, show me the hundred fold that is promised, and I will freely quit all things of this life to obtain it. But why should I show it ? Since faith, which has human reason for its voucher, can have no merit. Will you sooner give credit to the evidence of man than believe the promises of God ? You err by diving too deeply into the hidden mysteries of the Lord. Unless you believe, you cannot understand. It is a hidden manna ; and in the apocalypse of St. John, a new name is promised that shall overcome : a name which no one knows but he that receives it.” And again he says : “Does he not possess all things to whom all things are turned to good ? Has he not received a hundred-fold who is filled with the Holy Ghost, and possesses Christ in his breast ? Or rather, shall we not say, that the visitation of the Holy Ghost, and the presence of Jesus Christ, far exceed the hundred-fold gift of any other thing? * Oh ? how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, which thou hast laid up for those that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee !’ saith the royal Psalmist. Ps. xxx. Observe here how the soul breaks forth into the remembrance, of the abundance of spiritual sweetness, and how, in endeavoring to express herself, she multiplies her words. ‘How great,’ saith she, ‘is the multitude,’ etc. This hundred-fold, therefore, is the adoption of children, the freedom and first-fruits of the spirit, the delight of charity, the glory of a good conscience, and the kingdom of God which is within us. It consists not in meat or drink, but in the justice, peace, and joy of the Holy Ghost. A joy indeed, not in the hopes of a future glory, but rather in the present suffering of tribulations. This is that fire which Christ would have vehemently to be enkindled. This is the virtue which made St. Andrew so cheerfully embrace the cross he was to die on, St. Lawrence despise the butcheries of his cruel tyrants, and which made St. Stephen, at his death, pray for those who stoned him. This is that peace which Christ left to those that should follow him, for it is ‘a gift, and peace to the elect of God. It is the peace of the father, and a gift of future glory. It exceeds all sense, and is not to be compared with anything under

the heavens, or whatever is desirable in this world. This is the plentiful grace of devotion, and the holy unction teaching us all those things, which they prove who have experienced them, and they who have not experienced are ignorant of.” Thus far St. Bernard.

Rejoice then, and be glad, and as I have said before, render thanks to God, that he has called you to receive this hundred-fold, and invited you to enter often into the paradise of joy, which by the study and exercise of prayer, you may hope to obtain.

CHAPTER XL

OUR LORD JESUS ASKS HIS DISCIPLES WHAT THE JEWS SAY OF HIM

AS our blessed Lord was coming into the quarters of Csesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples what the Jews said of him, and likewise, whom they thought him to be, and other things. Some of them answered, and said : “Some take you for John the Baptist, others for Elias, and others for Jeremiah, or one of the Prophets.” But Peter, for himself and the rest, answered : “Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.” And our Lord said to him: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.” At the same time he gave him the keys of Heaven, the power to loose or bind upon earth. Behold here, then, pious reader, our Lord and his disciples, and contemplate them according to the general rules before given you. And observe, more over, that Peter, whom Christ so exalted above the rest, was a little after called Satan by the same Christ, because through the too great attachment which Peter had to the visible presence of Christ’s humanity, he endeavored to dissuade him from suffering, and from going through his passion. Do you likewise follow the example of Christ, and esteem them to be your enemies, who endeavor to draw you from the practice of spiritual exercises, for the sake of any temporal good or corporal gratification.

CHAPTER XLI

THE GLORIOUS TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD JESUS ON MOUNT TABOR

OUR Lord Jesus, desirous to strengthen his apostles in the steadfast belief, both of his divinity and humanity, first showed them that he was perfect man, by living among them as a man ; and that he was also perfect God, by the wonderful miracles he wrought, which far surpassed the power and nature of a pure man. He had likewise farther told them, that, as man, he should suffer a most painful and opprobrious death ; and afterwards rise again gloriously to life, as he was God. After all this he concluded, and said, that there were some of them then present, who should not see death till they had first seen the Son of Man, who was himself, coming in his kingdom ; that is to say, beheld him in his glorious transfiguration, and saw his sacred humanity resplendently shining with a wonderful brightness, as they should afterwards behold him in his heavenly glory.

To this purpose, therefore, about eight days after, he took with him three of his disciples, Peter, James, and John, and went up to the top of a mountain called Tabor, and was there transfigured before them ; that is, he was so altered and changed from his common appearance, that he put on that beautiful and glorious form, in which he was to appear seated in the high throne of Majesty, so that his face and countenance became bright as the sun, and his garments were as white as snow.

And presently there appeared Moses and Elias speaking with him concerning his sacred passion, which he was to undergo in Jerusalem, and said : “Lord, it is not expedient for thee to die, because one drop only of thy precious blood is sufficient to redeem the world.” But our Lord Jesus answered, “The good pastor giveth his life for his sheep : so, therefore, it

behooves me to do.” The apostles remained ecstatic amidst this glorious vision : and St. Peter above the rest, being forgetful of all earthly things, was desirous of remaining therein possession of that glance of bliss, and therefore said, “ Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles : one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” John xvii. But as the holy Evangelist takes notice, “He knew not what he said “ in desiring to continue with our Lord Jesus in that place of bliss, before he had suffered that painful death, which he had before told them he was first to do. The Holy Ghost, likewise appearing in the brightness of a cloud, overshadowed him, and out of the cloud there came a voice from Heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, .hear ye him.” The apostles, trembling with fear at this voice, fell flat, with their faces to the ground: but our Lord Jesus raised them, and bid them not to fear: and lifting up their eyes, and looking around them, they saw none but him alone. Contemplate well these passages, and endeavor to render yourself present, by devout meditation, to the things already said, because they contain most great and sublime mysteries.

CHAPTER XLII

THE BUYERS AND SELLERS CAST OUT OF THE TEMPLE

OUR Lord Jesus, at two several times, cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple ; which action, of all the miracles he wrought, seems the most strange and wonderful. For when he performed other miracles among them, in which he evidently declared the power of his Godhead, those perverse people, the scribes and Pharisees, blasphemed and contemned him for them : but at this time, though there were great multitudes assembled together in the temple, they had not power to resist or withstand him ; while he, with a scourge made of cords, drove them all out before him. The reason of this was, that his inward zeal and fervor being vehemently enkindled in seeing his heavenly Father so much dishonored, especially in that place where he ought to have been the most honored and worshipped, made him appear to them with a terrible and dreadful countenance, so that they were affrighted, and had not power to resist him. Consider him here attentively, and compassionate him, for he is full of compassionate grief: but, at the same time, fear him. For it is a dreadful example that ought to be considered by all men ; but more especially by such as have any office or authority in the Church of God, and by all religious persons who are placed in the house of God, to serve him in devout prayer, and other holy and spiritual exercises. For if such idly busy themselves, and meddle with worldly affairs, they may justly fear the wrath and indignation of God against them, and apprehend the danger of being cut off from his grace in this life, and cast out of his eternal glory in the life to come.

CHAPTER LXIII

THE SICK MAN THAT WAS HEALED AT THE WATER IN JERUSALEM, CALLED PROBATICA PISCINA

THERE was in the city of Jerusalem a standing pool of water, in the nature of a pond, in which the sheep were washed that were to be offered in sacrifice. In this place also, according to the opinion of the Fathers, afterwards lay hidden the wood of the holy cross. This water was stirred once in every year, by particular appointment of God, by an angel, and the sick person that first descended into it after its being stirred was immediately healed of his infirmity: on which account great numbers of sick people remained continually near the water, expecting it to be moved by the angel. Among these there was one lying on his bed, who had been ill of the palsy thirty eight years, whom our Lord healed on the Sabbath-day. Here, according to your usual method, consider how humbly our Lord approaches the sick man, and speaks to him. For in this action there are three things worthy of the greatest attention.

The first is, our Lord Jesus asked the sick person whether he would be healed or not ? By which we are given to understand, that our Lord, without our consent, will not bestow salvation upon us. Wherefore all stubborn and sinful persons, who neither desire, nor yet will give consent to such internal motions as God inspireth them with for their salvation, are undoubtedly without excuse. For as St. Augustine saith, “ He that made thee without thee, cannot save thee without thee.”

The second thing which is to be observed is, that we ought to be careful after we are freed and cleansed from sin, not to fall wilfully into it again,

lest our crime, for so doing, should be punished by our Lord with more severity. Wherefore he said to the sick man whom he had restored, “Go thy way and sin no more, lest worse happen unto thee.”

The third thing we ought to consider is, that wicked men usually misconstrue the good works of others, and look upon them with an evil eye : but good men do the contrary. For thus the Jews, full of envy, when they saw the sick man miraculously cured by our Lord Jesus, and carrying away his bed on the Sabbath, immediately told him, “That it was not lawful to do it on that day ;” to whom he answered, “ That he who had made him whole, said to him, take up thy bed and walk.” Before this, they asked him not who it was that had healed him, but began to carp at what displeased them, and what they thought reprehensible and took no notice at all of the good work which was commendable and so manifestly wrought before them. This is the manner of all wicked men, to turn everything to the worst, which good men convert to the best. For they who lead a spiritual life interpret all things in the best manner, to the honor and glory of God, whether prosperity or adversity, knowing that everything which comes to pass is through his holy will or permission ; and therefore judge the best of, and reap thence great increase of merit, as St. Bernard teaches, saying, “Pry not too far into other men’s lives, nor rashly judge of their actions. Think no evil of thy neighbor, but if thou see anything that is bad, excuse at least his intention if you cannot his works : imagine the cause to be ignorance, inadvertency, or an accident. And if his crimes are beyond all dissimulation, say at least to yourself, it was the effect of a violent temptation: had it been as powerful in me what destruction would it not have wrought ?” Thus far St. Bernard. That the good reap benefit from all things, even from their own and other men’s sins, from the things most hurtful, and from the works of the devil himself, the same saint thus argues : “ Though the irrational and animal part cannot attain to what is spiritual, yet it must be owned that, by the bodily service it does, it very much helps those to obtain it, who turn the use of all temporal and worldly things to the eternal advantage of their souls, by making use of the things of this life, as if they used them not. ‘ And again: “Though there are some creatures which are found not only useless, but inconvenient, and even pernicious, yet it is certain that they contribute to the good of temporal and worldly men. For they have ever something that may turn to the good of those, who, according to their resolution, are called

saints, if not by affording nourishment or performing their due office, at least by exercising their mind by the help of him, who is always ready to those who make use of their reason, helping them to make a proficiency in good discipline ; by whom also, ‘ The invisible things of God are seen, being understood by those things which are made.’ Rom. i. In short, he that has grace enough to take all things in good part, and to suppose that all which God sends is for the best, shall be enabled to suffer many trials and tribulations, with little pain ; and by daily exercise obtain at length so great a peace and tranquillity of mind, that seldom or never anything shall offend or molest him, but that shall be verified in him, which the wise may saith, ‘Whatever shall happen to the just man it shall not make him sorry.’ “ Prov. xii.

CHAPTER XLIV

OUR LORD JESUS RECEIVED BY THE TWO SISTERS, MARY AND MARTHA ; AND OF THE TWO SORTS OF LIVES SIGNIFIED THEREBY

IT happened on a certain time, that our Lord Jesus went with his disciples to the city of Bethania, to a house named the castle of Martha and Mary. And they, whose love and affections were wholly placed in him, were exceeding glad at his coming, and received him with all possible joy and respect. Martha, the eldest sister, who had the care and government of the house, went immediately to provide meat for him and his disciples, but Mary her sister, forgetting as it were, all corporal food, and desiring to feed her soul with the fervent love of her dear Saviour Jesus, sat herself on the ground, beside his feet. And as our Lord, who was never idle, was talking according to his usual custom, of those things which regard eternal life, she, with her heart and thoughts fixed on him, attentively listened to his blessed words, and took a pleasure beyond expression, in the exposition of his heavenly doctrine. Martha, who was busy in making ready the provision for our Lord and his disciples, seeing her sister sitting idly as it were at his feet, was troubled at it, and therefore complained to our Lord, and begged him to bid her sister to rise and help her.

Mary, at the voice of her sister, awakened as it were from the depth of a sweet sleep, and fearing she would be deprived of that sweet contentment and quiet repose in which her soul was being, always obedient to the will of God, said nothing, but reverently bowing down her face to the ground, humbly waited to hear what our Lord would say to her. Our Lord answering

in her behalf, said unto Martha : “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many things : but one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the better part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

At this answer of our Lord Jesus, Mary was greatly comforted, and sat with more confidence at his sacred feet, pursuing with perseverance her former purpose. But at length, when all was ready for his refection, and he had done speaking, she arose, fetched water to wash his hands, and remaining there present diligently served him with all things he wanted. Consider here attentively, pious reader, our Lord entering this house, and with what extreme joy they receive him, together with all that passed as before mentioned, because thence you may gather most beautiful matter for your devout meditation.

You must know then, that by these two sisters, the Holy Fathers understand two different states of life, the one active, the other contemplative. To treat of these would be a subject of great extent, but though I am convinced that it is not necessary to dwell long upon it, I will, nevertheless, say something on that head : first, because St Bernard in many places has largely treated of it ; and secondly, because it is a subject most useful, full of all spiritual comfort, and very necessary. According to this two fold manner of living we all proceed, but how we ought to act, is a matter we are ignorant of ; which is unfortunate and dangerous, especially to men of religious lives.

The active kind of life is emblematically represented in Martha : which active life itself is divisible into two parts. The first is, that by which every one acts chiefly for his own good ; correcting, mending, and improving himself in virtue ; and next for the good of his neighbor, by works of justice, piety, and charity. The second is, that by which a man is led, though for greater merit’s sake, to exercise himself chiefly for his neighbor’s advantage, in governing, teaching, and forwarding the conversion of souls : as prelates and preachers do. Between these two parts of active life is the contemplative ; and it is disposed in this manner, that every one do exercise himself, first in prayer, sacred studies, and other good deeds and offices of life, with an intention to correct his own vices and acquire virtues ; secondly, that he rest in contemplation, seeking solitude, and conversation apart with God ; and, thirdly, that by both exercise inspired and enlightened

with true wisdom and goodness, and thence become zealous, give himself up to the salvation of others.

CHAPTER XLV

OUR LORD WARNS THE JEWS THAT THE CHURCH SHALL DEVOLVE ON THE GENTILES, IN THE PARABLE OF THE HUSBANDMEN WHO KILLED THE SON OF THEIR LORD

OUR Lord, zealous for the salvation of the souls for which he was come to pay down the ransom of life, tried by every means to draw them to himself, and to deliver them from the jaws of sin and Satan. Sometimes, therefore, he made use of the most gentle and insinuating means ; and at others of severe and terrifying reproofs : sometimes he recurred to similitudes, sometimes to signs and wonders ; now to prophecies, and anon to threats : thus varying the means and manner of cure, according to the place and time, and the diversity of persons.

In this place he reproves the princes and Pharisees, with severe language, which, however, was so justly applied, that they took it to themselves. He proposed to them the parable of the husbandmen, who killed their lord's messengers, sent to them to demand payment of the fruits due to him, and asked what punishment was due to such unworthy tenants ; they replied, their lord must destroy the wretches, and let his vineyard to other husbandmen. Jesus, therefore, approving their answer, replied to them : the kingdom of God, that is the Church, shall be taken from among you : and shall be given to another people, who will cultivate it : that is, to the Gentiles : of whom we and the whole church are descended To this he added the example of the corner-stone, which signified himself, who was to

overthrow Judaism. Upon which, finding themselves to be the persons meant, instead of reforming, they became more exasperated, and quite blinded with malice.

CHAPTER XLVI. -THE JEWS SEEK TO ENSNARE OUR SAVIOUR BY HIS OWN WORDS

AS our Lord Jesus neglected no means that might conduce to the salvation of the Jews, so, on the contrary, the Jews omitted none to calumniate and destroy him. They thought, therefore, to deceive him. but they deceived themselves with their own devices. They sent to him some of their own disciples, accompanied by the servants of Herod, to inquire whether it was lawful for them to give tribute to Caesar ? By this means, they hoped to bring him under the suspicion of Caesar and his friends, or render him at least odious to the Jews, believing he could not answer but against himself. But the all-wise searcher of hearts, seeing their malice, answered them, that they must give to Caesar his own and to God his due ; and told them withal, that they were hypocrites who concealed under fair words a malicious purpose. Thus disappointed in their fraudulent intentions, they returned with shame. Here consider attentively our Lord Jesus, according to the general method of contemplation I laid down for you ; and reflect likewise, that Christ will not allow us to defraud temporal princes and magistrates of their just rights, whether good or bad, believers or unbelievers. Wherefore, it is a great sin to refuse payment of the customs and taxes, which our temporal superiors think proper to lay on us for the good of the state.

CHAPTER XLVII

THE BLIND MAN RESTORED TO SIGHT AT JERICHO, ETC

THE bountiful Lord Jesus, who, out of his immense love for us, came down from his divine Father's throne to accomplish our salvation, prepared to set out for Jerusalem, to meet his approaching passion, which he had even at this time foretold to them, but they were too blind in their obstinacy to understand him. When, therefore, he drew near to Jericho, a certain blind man, who sat on the way begging, having intelligence from the populace of his passing by, began to cry powerfully to him for pity. And though the multitude rebuked him, they could neither dismay nor silence him. The Lord Jesus, therefore, out of regard to his faith and fervor, ordered him to be brought to him, and asked him, "What wilt thou that I do unto thee?" To whom the blind man answered, "Lord, that I see:" which our compassionate Lord granted saying, "See :" and thus saying, restored him to sight. Consider here attentively, devout reader, the graciousness of our Lord : and at the same time reflect on the great efficacy of prayer, attended with faith and perseverance. Importunity in prayer, you see, does not displease God, but is rather agreeable to him. You have already an instance of this in the Cananean, and elsewhere, and another in the man who obtained the loaves by night through the importunity of prayer. And thus does the Lord grant to all who importune him their just and orderly petitions. For it is to every one alike he says : "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" Nay, he often grants even more than is asked, as we shall see in the person of Zacheus. Ask, then, like the blind man, without blushing. For why should you blush to serve God, to throw off sin, or to ask the graces necessary for either. To be bashful, is sometimes a virtue, but may often times be a great fault, as St. Bernard

observes : “There is a shame to sin, and a shame to glory. It is a good shame to blush at the thought of sinning or having sinned. And though no human witness be by, you ought with so much the more modesty to revere the presence of a divine one, as you are truly convinced by how much he surpasses man in purity, and that he is as heinously offended at sin as he is distant from it. Such a kind of shame may boldly bid defiance to reproach, and paves a way to glory, by not admitting sin, or at least by repenting of and atoning for it, if committed. But should we be ashamed or grieved to make acknowledgment of our faults ; such a shame is to sin, and deviates widely from glory. For the evil which compunction would fain expel from the heart, this false, this foolish shame, the binder of all lips, suffer not to be banished from it. O sovereign kind of victory to yield to the divine Majesty ; and t find no reluctance in submitting to the authority of his Church ! O strange perversity, not to blush at defiling, and yet to blush at cleansing your feet.” Thus far St. Bernard.

Whatever may occur to your imagination concerning this blind man, is alike applicable to those other two blind men whom our Lord enlightened at his going forth from Jericho, as he did this before his entrance into that city. Of the two former, see St. Matthew, chap, xx., and St. Mark, chap, x., where the name of one of them is mentioned : and that upon their crying out, as this poor man did, they received the same answer, and were cured by our Lord.

CHAPTER XLVIII

OUR LORD GOES INTO THE HOUSE OF ZACHEUS

WHEN our Lord Jesus, at his entry into Jericho, was passing through the streets, Zacheus, the chief of the publicans, who was informed of his approach, and very desirous to see him, but could not for the throng : at length, being a very little man, he got up into a sycamore tree that he might at least behold him thence. Jesus therefore, knowing and accepting his faith and desire, said to him, “ Zacheus, make haste and come down, for I must this day abide in thy house.” He immediately came down, received him with great joy and reverence, and prepared for him a noble repast. Here you see, Christian reader, the gracious courtesy of our blessed Saviour, who grants Zacheus so much more than he presumed to hope for, or ask. He sought a sight of him, and Jesus gave him himself. Such is the power of prayer ! And the desire is such 1 Nay, it is a loud voice, and an effectual petition. Wherefore says the Psalmist, “The Lord hath granted the desire of the poor, and thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart.” And at the time when Moses was silent with his lips, and speaking only in his heart, the Lord said to him, ‘ ‘ Why do you cry aloud to me?” Exod. xiv. Contemplate here our divine Lord, graciously sitting at table with Zacheus, amidst a company of sinners, and familiarly conversing with them, in order to gain them over to himself. Behold, likewise, the disciples, sitting with the same sinners, and conversing with, and encouraging them to good works: knowing it to be the will of their divine master.

CHAPTER XLIX

CHRIST GIVES SIGHT TO THE MAN BORN BLIND

WHEN” our Lord went to Jerusalem he saw a man that was born blind, whose name was Caelidonius : and stooping down, he made paste of earth with his spittle, with which he anointed his eyes, and sent him to the pool called Siloe, to bathe. The man went, bathed his eyes, and received his sight. This miracle, which was strictly examined into by the Jews, turned to their confusion. See the story in the gospel, where it is plainly and beautifully related. Behold her*1 our Lord Jesus, and contemplate him according to the general rules already laid down to you. Here, too, consider the great gratitude of the cured man, who courageously and resolutely defends our divine Lord before the very princes and rulers of the Jews, without sparing them in any way, even before he had the blessing of seeing our Lord. The virtue of gratitude is extremely commendable and pleasing in the sight of God, as its opposite is a detestable vice before him. Of which subject, thus speaks St. Bernard : “ Learn to be thankful for every grace received. Consider diligently the favors heaped upon you, that no gift of God be defrauded of the due return of gratitude and thanksgiving you ought to make, whether the gift be great, middling, or little. Lastly, we are directed to gather the fragments, lest they perish : that is, not to suffer the least benefit bestowed upon us to be forgotten. But does not that perish which is conferred upon the ungrateful ? In gratitude is the soul’s worst enemy ; it is the destroyer of merit, the disperser of virtues and the exterminator of all good. Ingratitude is a burning gale, which dries up the very spring¹ of piety, the dew of mercy, and the stream of grace.”

CHAPTER L

OUR LORD RETREATS FROM THE TEMPLE TO HIDE HIMSELF WHEN THE JEWS WOULD HAVE STONED HIM

WHEN” our Lord Jesus was preaching one day in the temple, he said, among other things, “ If any one keeps my word, he shall never taste death.” The Jews answered him, “You are then greater than our father Abraham who died?” To which our Saviour replied, “Before Abraham was made, I am.” Which the Jews taking for an impossibility, and an untruth, took stones to stone him. But he retired out of the temple and hid himself ; for as yet the hour of his passion was not come. Behold, then, with concern, how the Lord of all is contemptuously treated by his vile, unworthy creatures, and how meekly he gives way to their fury, retreats amidst the crowd, and, with his disciples, patiently and modestly withdraws from the effects of their rage, like the weakest among them.

CHAPTER LI

THE JEWS SEEK A SECOND TIME TO STONE HIM

ANOTHER time, at the feast of the dedication of the temple, our Lord being in Solomon's porch, was surrounded by these ravenous wolves, who, grinning with their teeth, said, "If thou art Christ, tell us openly?" To whom the most meek and patient Lamb of God answered humbly, "I tell you so ; but you do not believe me." Behold here, then, this affecting scene. He speaks to them with humble affability ; and they, with brutal noise and fury, disturb and molest him, and at length, not able to contain the venom in their breasts, take stones to throw at him. Nevertheless, our Lord spoke to them in engaging words, saying, "I have done many good things amongst you ; for which of them is it that you would stone me." "Because," say they, "you being a man, would make yourself a God." Observe their unaccountable stupidity. They would know whether he is Christ, and when he proves it to them by words and actions, they want to stone him, without being able to produce one excuse why they cannot or ought not to believe him to be what he really is. But as his hour was not yet come, he got safe out of their hands, and retired to that part of Jordan where John had baptized, which is distant from Jerusalem about eighteen miles. Behold then our Saviour, and consider him and his disciples under this affliction, and mentally compassionate them with all the tenderness you are master of.

CHAPTER LII

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

THIS miracle is a famous one, very solemn, and worthy to be meditated on with the utmost devotion. Wherefore, endeavor to render yourself as present in mind to all that is here said, as if you had actually been present when it happened ; and freely converse, and not only with our Lord Jesus and his disciples, but with all this blessed family, so devoted to and beloved by our Lord, that is, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. Lazarus therefore being dangerously ill, and at the point of death, his sisters, who were very intimate with Christ, sent to him to the place whither he had retreated beyond Jordan, saying, “Our brother Lazarus, whom you love, is sick.” They sent him no further message, either because they thought that sufficient to a friend, and an understanding one ; or else because they dared not invite him, knowing that the chiefs of the Jews were laying snares for his life. Our Lord Jesus hearing the news, remained silent for two days ; and then, among other things, said to his disciples, Lazarus is dead ; and I rejoice for your sakes, that I was not there. Observe the goodness, love, and diligence of our Lord, with relation to his disciples. They returned then, and came near to Bethany. Martha, as soon as she was informed of it. ran to meet him, and falling at his feet, said, “ Lord, if you had been here, my brother had not died.” Our Lord answered, that he should arise, and thence they began to talk of the resurrection.

Then he sent for Mary, for whom he had a special love ; who no sooner knew of it, than she arose, and came to him with haste, and falling at his feet said the same thing. Our Lord, seeing his beloved afflicted and in tears, could not refrain from tears himself, but wept with her. Behold him, then, with the devout women and his disciples weeping; and be moved with the tenderness of the affecting scene.

After awhile, our Lord asked them, “Where have you put him ?” Not that he did not know ; but because, as he was talking to human creatures, he spoke to them in a human manner. They answered him, “ Lord, come and see.” And they led him to the sepulchre ; whither he proceeded between the two devout females, comforting and condoling with them, till they were so consoled as almost to forget and drown all sensations of grief in their attention to him.

When our Lord arrived at the monument, he commanded the stone to be removed, which Martha would have dissuaded him from, saying, that the corpse must smell strong, having been four days dead. But our Lord would have the stone removed. Which done, our Lord Jesus, lifting up his eyes towards heaven, said, “I give you thanks, Father, that you have heard me : I know indeed that you always hear me ; but I speak on account of these, that they may know that you have sent me.” Behold him, then, devout reader, behold him thus praying, and consider his great zeal for the salvation of souls. After this he cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Lazarus, come forth.” And he straight came to life, and started forth from the tomb, but tied as he was when buried. But the disciples untied him, by Christ’s direction. Lazarus, when he was untied, and with his sisters, kneeled down, and returned thanks to Jesus for so great a benefit : after which they conducted him home. All who were present were extremely astonished at what they saw, and made it so public, that multitudes, from Jerusalem and all parts, came to see Lazarus : insomuch, that the princes of the Jews, thinking themselves confounded, formed designs against his life.

CHAPTER LIII

CHRIST CURSES THE FIG-TREE

THOUGH, according to historical narration, the curse of the fig-tree, and the presenting of the adulteress in the temple, be thought posterior to Christ's arrival in Jerusalem, yet. as it seems most proper after that arrival, to employ our meditations wholly on the passion, and the circumstances relating to it, I have inserted these two facts in this place. As then our Lord Jesus was going towards Jerusalem, he was hungry, and saw a fig-tree very beautifully adorned with branches and foliage. Coming therefore nigh he beheld it more closely, and finding no fruit on it, he cursed it, and it withered ; to the great surprise of his disciples. This was mystically done by our Saviour, who knew it to be a time not proper for such trees to bear. Arid he did it to signify the curse attending on hypocrites and loquacious persons, who are like well ornamented trees without fruit.

CHAPTER LIV

THE WOMAN DETECTED IN ADULTERY

THE perverse Pharisees and princes of the Jews were perpetually watching, and studiously contriving how to surprise Christ by their frauds and wiles, and render him odious to the people. But their arrows were turned against themselves. As therefore a woman had been caught in adultery, and was to be stoned according to the law, they brought her to him into the temple, to enquire of him what should be done to her : which they did to perplex him, that if he should direct the law to be fulfilled, they might cast upon him the odious imputation of cruelty and want of mercy : or of injustice, if he should offer to screen her from the law. But our all-wise Saviour, seeing the snare; and willing to avoid it, humbly stooped down, and wrote with his finger on the ground ; the commentators tell us, that what he wrote was the sins of the accusers, and this writing was of such efficacy, that every one was able to read his own sins therein. When, therefore, our Lord raised himself again, and said to them u Let him among you who is without sin, throw the first stone,” they departed, astonished and confounded, although Christ, when he had pronounced the sentence, was gracious enough to stoop again, for the sake of his envious adversaries,” to save them from confusion. And thus did their duplicity evaporate and come to nothing. After her accusers were gone, our Lord admonished the woman and dismissed her. Contemplate, then, our divine Redeemer in all these circumstances, according to the rule I have prescribed to you in the beginning of this work.

CHAPTER LV

THE CONSPIRACY OF THE JEWS AGAINST CHRIST ; AND HIS FLIGHT INTO THE CITY OF EPHRAIM

THE time approaching when our Lord Jesus designed to work our redemption by the effusion of his precious blood, the devil armed his ministers, and sharpened the malice of their hearts against him, even to death ; and the good works of our Lord, especially the raising of Lazarus, but incensed them the more to envy and rage. Whence, able no longer to contain their fury, the high priests and Pharisees held a council, in which Caiphas prophecying, they deliberated upon killing the most innocent Lamb of God. O wicked council ! O reprobate guides of the people, and evil advisers ! Wretches, what are you about to do ? To what excess does your frenzy transport you ? What a sentence is this ! Where is the occasion for your murdering the Lord your God ? Is he not in the midst of you, though you know him not, searching your reins and hearts ? But thus it is expedient that it should be done as you have desired. His heavenly Father has delivered him up into your hands, by you he is to be put to death, but, alas, his death shall not prove serviceable to you. He indeed shall die and rise again to save his people, but you shall perish from among his people.

The resolution of the council was made public, and our Lord was acquainted with it, but his wisdom, willing to give way to their wrath, especially as everything was not completely fulfilled concerning him, he went to that side of the country near the desert, to the city of Ephraim. Thus flies the humble Lord of the highest heavens, before the face of his most vile and abject servants. Contemplate here our Lord Jesus Christ, and his

disciples, under the repeated affliction of a painful and necessitous flight. Meditate likewise how our blessed Lady, his immaculate mother, and her sisters, remained with St. Mary Magdalen, whom our Lord, before his departure, consoles with the promise of his speedy return.

CHAPTER LVI

OUR LORD RETURNS TO BETHANIA, WHERE MARY MAGDALEN ANOINTS HIS FEET

AS we have seen that our Lord Jesus for our instruction used prudence in retreating from danger, to show us, that according to the exigence of time and place, we ought to decline, with all lawful caution, the fury of persecutors : so now he makes use of fortitude, returning of his own accord, when the due time approaches, that he may meet his passion, and deliver himself up into the hands of his persecutors. And as before he made use of temperance, when he declined the multitude who sought to make him king, now he exerts his justice, when he prepares to demand the honors of a king, and that the people strew branches of palm and olive before him. But how modestly does he receive this honor, sitting humbly on an ass ! Our divine master here made use particularly of these four virtues, prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, for our instruction. They are called cardinal virtues, that is, principal virtues, because from them all other moral virtues flow.

Our Lord, then, on the sabbath-day, before his triumph of palms, returned to Bethania, about two miles from Jerusalem, where a supper was prepared for him at the house of Simon the leper, where were present Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. It was at that time Mary poured on the head of Jesus a pound of precious ointment, and anointed his head and feet. And what she once did in the same house out of contrition, she now repeats out of devotion: for she loved him above all things, and could not be satiated with honoring him.

But the traitor Judas thought a great deal of this, and murmured at it ; when our Saviour answered for her, and defended her vigorously. Nevertheless, the traitor remained so greatly offended at it, that he from that time took occasion to betray him ; and on the Wednesday following, sold him for thirty pieces of silver. Behold then our divine Saviour here supping with his friends, and conversing with them for few remaining days, until his passion ; but chiefly in the house of Lazarus and his sisters, for that was his usual refuge : there he eat by day, and there he reposed by night, with his disciples. There likewise our blessed Lady with his sisters, reposed ; whom this devout family, and chiefly Magdalen, honored, revered, and attended with constancy and affection. Behold then this immaculate virgin mother, struck with excess of fear for her dearly beloved Son, from whom she was never apart any more than was absolutely necessary. When our Lord, in defending Magdalen from the traitor's murmurings, said, "Pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it for my funeral," think you not that these words like a dagger, pierced the soul of the blessed mother? For what could he say more express to foretell his death ? So all were struck with fear, and full of anxious and disturbing thoughts : talking to each other like persons in the utmost confusion and terror ; none knew what advice to give, or what to take ; and all were in the utmost terror whenever he went to Jerusalem, which, however, he did every day : for from this Saturday to the day of his last supper, he said many things to the Jews, and wrought wonders openly in Jerusalem, all which I intend to pass in silence, except his riding on the ass, lest our meditation be interrupted ; for we are now on the verge of his passion.

Summon, then, devout reader, all your recollection, that nothing may distract or divert you from the solemn mysteries which precede or attend his passion ; be watchful and attentive to the whole and every circumstance of it, that you may reap the benefit he designs you by it.

CHAPTER LVII

OUR LORD JESUS COMES TO JERUSALEM, ON PALM SUNDAY, RIDING UPON AN ASS

MYSTERIES were daily wrought, and the Scriptures fulfilled, by our Lord Jesus ; and the time drawing nigh, he was desirous of redeeming mankind, through the bitter passion of his sacred humanity. Wherefore, on the next Sunday, very early in the morning, he prepared to go to Jerusalem, in a manner he had never gone before, that he might fulfil the words of the prophet, which were written to that purpose.

When his blessed mother found that he was resolved to depart, she endeavored earnestly to dissuade him from it, and with tender affection said, “ My beloved son, whither will you go ? Why will you go among those whom you know conspire against you. and seek to kill you? I beseech you therefore I not to go among them.” And his disciples, and Mary Magdalen, in the same manner entreated him, and besought him to stay: “Go not among them, O Lord,” say they, “we pray you: since you know they seek your death, and if you throw yourself into their hands this day, they will secure you, and execute their wicked purpose.” O how sincerely did they love him, and how sensibly were they affected at the apprehension of everything that might hurt him ! But he who thirsted after the salvation of man, had disposed it otherwise, wherefore he said : “It is the will of my Father that I should go, come ye also, fear not, for he will protect us, and this night we shall return hither without hurt.” And immediately he set out for his journey, and that small but faithful company followed him.

When he came to a certain place in the way, which was called Bethphage, he sent two of his disciples to the city of Jerusalem, and bid them fetch him an ass and her foal, that were tied in the highway, for the use of such poor people who had no beasts of their own. When they were brought, the disciples bid their own clothes, upon them, and our Saviour meekly seated himself upon the ass, and riding in that humble manner, came into the city of Jerusalem. Consider him here attentively, and behold how in this, he reproves the pomp and glory of worldly vanity. The beast he rode was not decked with rich furniture : instead of golden trappings, embossed saddles, and curious bridles, all the ornaments consisted of poor clothes, and a hempen halter, though he was “ King of kings, and Lord of lords.” Now when the people heard of his coming, through the fame of raising Lazarus from the dead, they went out to meet him, and received him as a king, with joyful hymns, and songs : and showing great tokens of gladness feet as he passed. But notwithstanding this, he mingled tears with their joy ; for when he beheld the city, he wept over it, saying, ‘If thou hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace : but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee ; and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee ; and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation.’”

It is manifest in scripture, that our Lord Jesus wept three different times. Once at the death of Lazarus, to show the wretched state of mankind, who incurred the pain of death through the offence of their first parents. Secondly, he wept on this day for the blindness and ignorance of men, namely, for the people of Jerusalem, who would not know the time of their glorious visitation. Thirdly, he wept in his passion, in beholding the malice and perversity of man’s heart, and considering that his passion being sufficient for the redemption of all the world, yet many would not partake of it. Concerning this last weeping. St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews says this, speaking of the time of his passion: “Who with a strong cry, and tears were heard for his reverence.” Heb. v. We are taught then from sacred text, that Christ wept these three times. But the holy Church relates that he wept a fourth time ; that is, in his tender infancy, and therefore she sings, “

The tender infant, as he lies in the cold manger, shakes and cries.” This he did to conceal from the devil the mystery of the incarnation.

Now our Lord Jesus weeping on this day so abundantly over Jerusalem, and with so sorrowful a heart, both for the eternal damnation, and also for the temporal destruction and ruin of that city, his holy mother, with all the apostles, could not refrain from weeping also.

Thus rideth our Lord upon that humble beast, having, instead of princes, and nobles, his poor disciples about him, together with his mother, and some other devout women, who both with fear and reverence devoutly followed him. He entered Jerusalem in triumph, being honored by all the people, whose shouts and acclamations put the whole city in great commotion. Our Lord went first into the temple, and a second time cast out the buyers and sellers. He stood openly in the temple, preaching and answering the questions of the Scribes and Pharisees all the day, till it drew towards night. But notwithstanding the great honor which before they had done him, yet they permitted him and his disciples to remain the whole day fasting, there being none among them that invited him to eat or drink. And when night was come, he went with his disciples to his homely lodging at Bethania, departing privately from the city with his small company, who, in the morning, had entered publicly with such great honor. Hence we may learn how little regard is to be paid to worldly honor, which lasteth so short a time, and so slightly vanisheth away.

CHAPTER LVIII

WHAT OUR LORD JESUS DID FROM PALM SUNDAY TO THE THURSDAY FOLLOWING

OUR Lord Jesus, the fountain of all charity, desirous to express both in word and deed the perfect charity he bore, as well to his enemies as to his friends, to the end that no one should be lost, but all might be saved, when the end of his life now drew near, and the time of his passion was at hand, labored diligently in preaching the gospel continually to the people; especially on these days, viz., Palm Sunday and the Monday and Tuesday following. On these days he came very early in the morning into the temple, and preached unto, and taught the people, and disputed with the Scribes and Pharisees, answering their subtle questions, by which they sought to entrap him, and in this manner was he busied from morning until night.

But as it would be too long to treat in particular of all that passed during that time, between our blessed Saviour and the Jews, it being also foreign to the passion, which we are now to speak of ; therefore, passing over all the examples and parables he made use of to reprove and convince them, we will especially consider how the chief priests and Pharisees, perceiving the people to be well disposed towards him, and fearing to execute openly their malicious designs against him, privately and subtly conspired together how they might entrap him in his words, and accuse him of saying something against their law, or against paying the tribute to Caesar, and thence condemn him as worthy of death. But our Lord, to whom the secrets of all men's hearts are open, knowing their treachery and malice, answered them so wisely, that they were disappointed in their purpose, and were so much

confounded, that they durst not ask him any more questions. He then severely reproved the pride, the hypocrisy, the covetousness, and many other wicked practices of the Scribes and Pharisees, saying to them : “ Woe be to you, Scribes and Pharisees, who love and seek after worldly glory.” Thus he proceeded, rebuking in many ways their evil lives and their wickedness, yet nevertheless he commanded the people to hear and fulfil their doctrine, but not to follow their wicked example. At length he repeated their great ingratitude and unkindness towards him. especially that of the city of Jerusalem, in so much as he was often desirous to have gathered them under his wings, even as a hen doth her chickens, but they would not, wherefore he forewarned them of their destruction, both temporal and eternal, and thus leaving them, went out of the temple, and with his disciples and many others of the Jews that believed in him, went to Mount Olivet, where he taught them how to prepare for their latter end, and told them of the day of judgment, in which the good should be placed at the right-hand of God in everlasting life, and the wicked on the left-hand, in perpetual misery and torment.

Thus did our Lord put an end to his public preaching to the Jews, on the Tuesday night before his passion ; after which he said to his disciples in private, “Know ye, that after two days, the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners to be crucified.” Oh, what a sorrowful speech was this to all his faithful followers ! But the horrid traitor Judas was glad to hear it : and consulted within his heart, by the instigation of the devil, who had entered into him, how or in what manner by his death he might satisfy his covetousness. For this purpose he slept not that night, but early on the morrow, which was Wednesday morning, when the chief priests and scribes were assembled together in the house of Caiphas, Judas went to them, and offered, for a reward, to deliver him into their hands. Wherefore they being glad of the offer, agreed to give him thirty pence : and thus was the death of our Redeemer effected through covetousness, treachery, and malice. Hence did that wicked traitor recover the price of the ointment which before he had murmured at as lost, and from that time he sought an opportunity that he might betray him.

This was the wicked doings of the accursed Judas and the Jews on the Wednesday following. But what, may we imagine, did our Lord Jesus and his blessed company ? He went not into Jerusalem, nor appeared publicly

among the Jews on that day, but spent, his whole time in prayer, and armed himself for the redemption of mankind, which he came to accomplish ; praying not only for his friends that believed in him and loved him, but also for his professed enemies ; fulfilling now in himself the holy perfection of charity, which before he had taught his disciples, in bidding them to pray for their enemies, and for those that should persecute and hate them.

Our Lord Jesus knowing the malice of Judas, this wicked traitor, and also how the Jews were bent against him, prayed to his heavenly Father for them. And as it was the last day that he was to dwell and converse so familiarly with his holy Mother and his apostles, he comforted them with his holy word, as he was wont to do ; but he did it the more especially now, to strengthen them against the great sorrows they were to suffer at his passion. And he comforted his blessed Mother and St. Mary Magdalen in a more particular manner, who continually thirsted to drink in the fountain of his holy grace, of which may he, of his infinite bounty and love, make us all partakers.

CHAPTER LIX

OUR LORD'S SUPPER THE NIGHT BEFORE THE PASSION : AND OF MANY CIRCUMSTANCES RELATING TO IT

WHEN the time was come in which our Lord Jesus had disposed all things for the working of the salvation of his people, and redeeming them, not with corruptible gold or silver, but with his most precious blood before he departed, by death, from his apostles, he would first make them a memorable supper, which might serve for a future token, and might fulfill those mysteries which till then had not been fulfilled.

This supper was truly magnificent, and the things great and wonderful which our Lord Jesus wrought at it for you. Concerning which, four things chiefly occur, which are most worthy your devout meditation. First, the supper itself. Secondly, his washing the feet of his disciples. Thirdly, the institution of the sacrament of his blessed body and blood. And fourthly, the composition of a sublime sermon by our Lord Jesus. All which we will treat of in their order.

First, then, consider, how Peter and John were sent by our Lord to a certain friend on Mount Sion, where there was a large room, to prepare the supper, or Pasch. Our Lord himself, with the rest of his disciples, entered the city on Thursday, when the day was almost spent, and repaired to the same place. Behold him, then, pious reader, standing amidst the apostles, and discoursing on heavenly subjects, while, in the meantime, the Pasch was preparing by some of the seventy-two disciples. When all things were ready, the beloved St. John, who was most familiar with our Lord, and who was diligent in seeing that everything should be in order, came to him and

said, "Lord when it pleaseth thee to sup, all things are ready." Wherefore, our blessed Saviour, with his twelve apostles, went up ; and John went also next to him, for there was none who loved him more truly, or that was more beloved by him in return : for when our Lord was taken. John followed him when the rest of the disciples fled, and was present at his passion, nor did he desert him either in his crucifixion, his death, nor even after his death until his burial : at this supper also he sat next to him, although he was the youngest of the apostles.

All having entered the small supper chamber, wash their hands, and standing around it, devoutly bless the table. Consider them attentively in all these things. According to ancient usage they sat on the ground around the table, which was placed thereon ; being composed of many boards joined together, its form is believed to have been squared ; I saw it at Rome, in the Church of St. John Lateran, and I measured it. The length of each side is about two brachia and three palms, so that although the space was small, three disciples are supposed to have sat at each side, and our Lord Jesus humbly at one corner. By this circumstance all were enabled to eat out of the same dish, and on this account it was that the disciples did not understand him when he said, "he that dippeth his hand into the dish with me shall betray me." The table having been blessed by the hand of our Lord, they all took their seats round it, and John sat next to Jesus. The Paschal Lamb was then brought to them, and you may either suppose them to have received it sitting in the manner I have mentioned, or to have eaten of it standing erect, with their staves in their hands, and thus fulfilling literally the precept of the law. In this case, however, you must imagine them after an interval to have sat down again, which may be known to have been the case from various passages in the Gospel, for in any other position John could not have reclined on our Lord's breast. The Paschal Lamb having then been brought in on a dish, was received by the true and immaculate Lamb of God. our Lord Jesus, who being in the midst of his disciples like a servant or steward cut it in pieces and offered it to them with alacrity, kindly pressing and urging them to partake of it. Whilst they were thus engaged, he declaring his mind to them more explicitly than he was wont, said, among other things : "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer ; but yet, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." This sentence like the keen sword

pierced their hearts ; they ceased eating, and, looking at one another, full of surprise and consternation, each one enquired anxiously, “ Lord, is it I ?” Contemplate them then at this juncture, and sympathize both with them and with our Lord Jesus, for their affliction is great. The traitor, however, in order to divert attention and suspicion from himself, ceased not from his occupation, but continued eating. John then, at the instigation of Peter, enquired of our Saviour, who was about to betray him, on which our Lord familiarly informed him as he would an intimate friend. John, astonished and stung to the heart by such perfidity, turned towards him and reclined on his breast. To Peter, however, our Lord did not communicate it, because, as St. Augustine observes, had he known the traitor, he would have torn him to pieces with his teeth. By Peter are signified active, and by John contemplative Christians, and from this fact you may learn that the latter, although to all appearance unoccupied, neither cease from their interior acts of devotion, nor yet seek to have the offenders against their Lord punished ; but, internally lamenting the crime, approaching more nearly and clinging more closely to God, seek a refuge from affliction in his love, and leave all things to the disposal of his divine providence.

After this our Lord Jesus arose from the table, accompanied by his disciples, who were ignorant of whither he wished to go. He descended to a lower apartment in the same house, as those who have seen the place suppose, and there causing all of them to sit down, he ordered water to be brought to him, laid aside his garments, girded himself with a towel, and proceeded to wash their feet. Peter, astonished, at the proposal of an action which to him appeared so unbecoming, positively refused to allow of its performance on himself ; but hearing the threat of Christ, that he should have no part in his glory if he permitted him not to do it, he humbly consented and submitted to his divine pleasure.

Here, pious reader, let us devoutly consider the humility of our Lord Jesus, and be diligently attentive to all that follows, it being a subject of great wonder and admiration : for what a sight was it to behold the King of Heaven and the Lord of all majesty humbly stooping himself to, and kneeling down at the feet of poor fishermen, who were sitting ; to behold him washing their feet, wiping them with a towel, and devoutly kissing them ! And what much more exalts his humility is, to behold him performing this mean office to Judas, the traitor,

who was to betray and sell him. Oh, perverse and wicked wretch ! Oh, hard and cruel heart ; more hardened than stone, and more impenetrable than the diamond, which is neither moved at so much humility, nor melted or become soft with the heat of such great charity ; and who trembleth not with fear at the presence of so great a majesty on his knees before you, but, on the contrary, you persist still in your wicked design of betraying and seeking the destruction of him, who is innocence itself, and whose bounty and ineffable goodness you experience even to the last. But, woe to you, oh wretch ! who still remaining inflexible, will infallibly bring forth what you have most execrably conceived, and in the end, not he, but you shall perish. It is undoubtedly a subject of great astonishment, to consider the ineffable bounty and meekness of our Lord Jesus, and to see the notorious obstinacy and malice of the wicked traitor Judas.

When this ceremony was ended, he again returned to the same place where he had supped ; where all being seated as before, he began to exhort them all to imitate the example he had given him. Wherefore, we may here contemplate how our Lord Jesus Christ left us this night of his passion an example of five sublime virtues ; that is, of humility, as we have seen in his washing of his disciples' feet ; of charity, in the institution of the adorable sacrament of his body and blood, and in the sermon he then made, which is full of charitable admonitions ; of patience in bearing with his wicked traitor, and suffering many reproaches when he was taken and led as a thief to judgment ; of obedience in going to suffer, and meeting an opprobrious death, to fulfil the will of his Father ; and of prayer, by praying three different times in the garden of Gethsemane.

Let us then endeavor to imitate him in these virtues ; and hence proceed to a consideration of the third point, that is, of the institution of the most adorable sacrament of the Eucharist. And in relation to this, we cannot behold without astonishment that most beloved condescension and sublime charity, with which he vouchsafed to give himself to us : ordaining that sacrament as a means whereby he might leave us that divine and heavenly food of his sacred body and blood. Wherefore, after he had washed his disciples' feet, to show them the ending of the sacrifices of the Old Law, and the beginning of the New Testament, and to make himself our only true sacrifice, he took bread into his blessed hands, and lifting up his eyes to his heavenly Father, he blessed it, and instituted the sacrament of his body, and

giving it to his disciples, said, “ Take ye and eat, for this is my body which shall be delivered for you.” And in the same manner he took the chalice, and said, “Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood which shall be shed for you, and for many, in the remission of sins.”

Here, Christian reader, attentively consider how devoutly, how diligently, and how truly our blessed Lord Jesus changed the substance of the bread into his precious body, and afterwards, with his own blessed hands, distributed it himself to that beloved and holy company, enjoining them to keep it as a memorial of his love, saying, “Do this in remembrance of me.” This is that sweet and precious memorial which renders man’s soul most grateful and pleasing to God, as often as it is worthily received : and therefore the consideration of this most excellent gift of love ought to inflame our souls with love, and wholly transform us into the giver. For what could he have given us more dear, more sweet, and more precious than himself ? He whom we receive in the sacrament of the altar, is the self same Son. of God, Christ Jesus, that took flesh and blood, and was born of the Virgin Mary, and suffered death on the cross for us, rose the third day from death to life, ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of the Father, and shall come again at the last day, to judge both the living and the dead, in whose power is both life and death, who made both heaven and hell, and finally, who can either reward us with the joys of the one, or punish us with the eternal pains of the other : he, the self same God and Man, is contained in that small host in the form of bread, which is daily offered to God the Father. He is our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the eternal and living God.

Touching the fourth and last point to be considered, let us now behold how this sovereign Master, after this institution, made to his disciples a most beautiful sermon, full of heavenly sweetness, and of divine love and charity. For having given to them that blessed sacrament, and amongst the rest, also to the wicked traitor Judas, he said to him : “That which thou doest, do quickly.” John xiii. And immediately that accursed monster went to the chief priests, to whom he had sold him on the Wednesday before, and asked them for help to apprehend and take him.

In the meantime he made the said sermon, which he preached to his disciples, giving them his peace, and chiefly recommended to them three principal virtues above all others ; that is, faith, hope, and charity. On charity he expressed himself in these words, saying : “I give you a new

commandment, which is, that you love one another : for by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another' And again: "If you love me and keep my commandments ; and whosoever loveth me, and keepeth my sayings, then shall my Father love him, and we will come to him and dwell with him." And in many other places he particularly recommended to them this charity as a worthy legacy, which he would now bequeath to them in his last will and testament.

Secondly, he established them in faith, and confirmed them more strongly in the belief of his divinity, saying, " Let not your hearts be troubled, and fear ye not, as ye have believed in God, so believe in me also." Further showing them that the Father and he were one ; and that though as man he was less than his Father, yet he was equal with him as he was God : and therefore he reprehended Philip, who asked him to show them the Father, saying, " that he who saw him, saw the Father." And in the conclusion of this point; he said, "If ye believe not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, yet at least believe me for the works that ye have seen me do, because no other could do the works which I have done."

Thirdly, he comforted them in hope many ways. And first, as to the effects of prayer, he said, " If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, whatever ye ask it shall be given you." Again he armed them in regard to all manner of tribulation, and the contempt of the world, saying, "If the world hate ye, you know that it hated me before you." Thus comforting their hope with patience in time of persecution, by his own example, who was their Lord and Master.

Lastly, he fortified them, lest they should despair by reason of his leaving them, telling them that they should conceive great sorrow for his absence for a short time, in regard to the death he was to suffer ; but that afterwards that sorrow should be changed into unspeakable joy, by means of his glorious resurrection from death, and his ascension to his Father, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost, whom he would send to comfort them in all their afflictions, and teach them all truth. And he concluded with these words, saying, " All this I have spoken to you, that ye might have peace in me. In the world you shall suffer much sorrow and affliction, but be of good heart, for I have overcome the world." Which was the same as to say, "and so shall you through my grace."

After this our Lord Jesus lifting up his eyes towards heaven, and addressing himself to his Father, said. “ Father, keep them whom thou hast given me. When I was with them I kept them. But now I come to thee. Holy Father; for them do I pray : not for the world, and not for them only do I pray, but for them also, that by their word shall believe in me. Father, whom thou hast given me, I will, that where I am, they also may be with me, that they may see my glory”. These, with many other things most moving and piercing, he spoke in the presence of his disciples. And it is certainly surprising to imagine how they, who loved him so tenderly, could possibly bear to hear them without melting with grief and sorrow. And doubtless whoever hath grace deeply to examine and dwell by devout meditation upon the sweet doctrine of our Lord and Saviour, cannot but be inwardly kindled with his divine love in beholding such great charity, benignity, goodness, and other things he was pleased to show this night of his sacred passion. Consider him while he speaks, behold in how affable, devout, and effectual a manner he imprints on the hearts of his disciples all he relates to them, and in some measure feeds their souls with the pleasing aspect of his divine countenance. Consider likewise the disciples, how sorrowful they stand to hear him, hanging down their heads, fetching deep sighs, and bitterly weeping ; being full of extreme sorrow and affliction, as Christ himself bears witness, saying, “Because I have spoken these things, sorrow hath filled your hearts.” And among the rest consider St. John, who above all was most familiar with our blessed Lord, how attentively he beholds his beloved master, and with a most tender anxiety takes particular notice of every word he says.

At length, among other things which he spoke, he said to them, “Arise, let us go hence.” Oh, what fear, may we not well imagine, did then seize their hearts ; not knowing as yet whither, or in what he would go ; believing that the time was now come, in which they were to be separated from him. They arose, however, and followed ; each striving which should be nearest to him, and all flocking round him, as her chickens around the hen ; they crowded in upon him, first one, and then another, through the earnest desire they had of being near him, and hearing his divine doctrine ; all which he, with great patience and benignity, suffered them to do. At last, having ended what he had to say to them, he brought them unto a garden on the other side of the brook Cedron, and there fixing himself in prayer, he waited

for Judas the traitor, and the rest that were to apprehend him, as we shall see in that which follows of his passion

CHAPTER LX

THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ; AND HIS PRAYER IN THE GARDEN

IT is now time for us to enter upon the subject of the passion of our Lord Jesus. But whoever desires to glory in the cross and passion of Jesus Christ, must devoutly apply himself to the pious and frequent meditation of it ; the mysteries of which, as well as every other thing that was done relating to it, if they were truly considered with all the attention of the mind, would, undoubtedly, transform each votary into a new man. Wherefore, pious reader, banishing from your heart all the vain and troublesome cares of this life, and all sorts of wandering and distracting thoughts which may hinder your attention, and disturb the tranquillity of your soul, endeavor, as far as possible, to render yourself attentive, as if present at the dismal tragedy of this sorrowful and bitter passion.

And first then, behold, how our Lord Jesus went over the brook Cedron into a garden, whither he was often used to resort with his disciples to pray. He took with him three of his most beloved disciples, Peter, James, and John, and telling them that his heart was heavy and sorrowful, even unto death, he bid them watch with him in prayer. And then going about a stone's cast from them, and throwing himself on his knees, he made his devout and humble prayer to his Father. We read that he often prayed thus : but he then prayed for us, as our advocate ; but now he prayed for himself. Have compassion on him, and admire his most profound humility ; who being God co-eternal and co-equal with his Father, forgets, as it were, his being so, and prays like men, humbly offering up petitions to his Father,

thus truly expressing his most perfect and submissive obedience to him. But what does he pray for? He prays to his heavenly Father, to take from him, if possible, the bitter chalice of his approaching passion, and that he might not die that cruel death of the cross, if it could any ways be agreeable to his divine will. But his prayer was not heard in this ; since his Father would have him to die, and would not spare him, though his true and only Son, but thus delivers him up for us all. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son. ‘ ‘ John iii Our Lord Jesus, therefore, submitted to this obedience, and faithfully fulfilled the divine will of his Father. Consider, likewise, the unspeakable charity both of the Father and Son towards us. It was for us that this death was inflicted upon him ; and he suffered it through the excess of the love he bore us. Wherefore, our blessed Lord prays still to his heavenly Father, saying, “ Most merciful and gracious Father, full of pity and compassion, I beseech you to hear my prayer, and despise not my supplication : attend unto me and hear me. I am sorrowful in my affliction : my soul is troubled within me, and my heart is afflicted. Incline your ear towards me, and hearken to the voice of my supplication. It pleased you, O heavenly Father, to send me into this world, to satisfy for the sin of man committed against us ; and presently I was ready at your command, and said, lo, I go : and I have farther declared your word and truth to them, dwelling among them, in many troubles, from my youth fulfilling your will in all you have commanded me, and am also ready to accomplish to the utmost those things which are to be done for their redemption ; yet you see, O most beloved Father, how maliciously my enemies have conspired against me ; I have ever done them good, and bestowed benefits on those that hated me ; and they have again rewarded me with evil for good, and returned me hatred for evil ; and at this present time they have corrupted my disciple, who hath sold me to them for thirty pence, and made him the instrument to destroy me. O Father, if it be your will, take from me, I beseech you, this bitter cup of my passion ; but if not, your blessed will be done. If they will not acknowledge me for your only Son, yet, as I have ever lived a righteous and innocent life, and wrought so many good works amongst them, they ought not to be so cruel and maliciously bent against me. Remember, oh, heavenly Father, that I have always stood before you to speak good for them, and to turn away^your wrath from them. And shall good be recompensed with evil? For they have

digged a pit for my soul, and prepared a most shameful death for me. Wherefore you, O Lord, who see all things, be not silent, forsake me not, but rise up to help me : for great tribulation is near at hand, and there is no other that can deliver me. My adversaries are all before you that seek my soul : and my heart hath expected reproach, and I am full of heaviness.”

This done, our Lord Jesus came again to his disciples, and finding them heavy with sleep, he awakened them, and bid them to watch and pray ; this he did also a second and third time ; and then returning again to prayer, he said as before, and added, “ Oh, most righteous Father, if it be so that you have absolutely ordained that I must suffer a most cruel death on the cross for man’s redemption, your most holy will be done. But first I recommend to your care, my beloved mother, and my disciples, whom hitherto I have always taken care of.” And while he was thus fervent in his holy prayer, his most precious blood gushed forth like sweat, from all parts of his sacred body, and ran down upon the ground, through the extreme violence of his bitter agony. Here is a subject of grief and sorrow, which ought to be sufficient to move the hardest heart to compassion at the anguish and pain which our blessed Lord Jesus suffered at that time for our sake. For by virtue of his divinity, he foresaw all the pains and torments which were to be inflicted upon him, and therefore, according to his humility, his tender body trembled with fear, and fell into a most violent and bloody sweat. Let us learn hence to check our frequent impatience by recollecting, that our Lord prayed three times to his Father before he received an answer.

Now at the third time, when he was in the most profound anguish of spirit, behold an angel from God, the prince of the celestial hierarchy, St. Michael, came down and stood before him, comforted him, and said, “Hail, O blessed Lord Jesus ! your devout prayer and bloody sweat I have offered up to your -Father, in the presence of the whole court of heaven. We all humbly prostrate before him, have besought him to take from you that bitter draught of your passion : but your heavenly Father answering us, said, ‘ My blessed Son knows full well that the redemption of mankind, which, out of our sovereign love to him, we so much desire, cannot be conveniently fulfilled without the shedding of his blood ; wherefore, if he is desirous of their salvation, he must die for them.’ ‘ To whom our Lord Jesus again replied, “ I desire above all things the salvation of man’s soul, and therefore, I choose rather cheerfully to suffer death, by which the souls

which my heavenly Father hath made to his own image and likeness, may be saved, than not to die, and that those souls should not be redeemed: Wherefore, my Father's will be done." The angel then again replying, said, "Be now of good heart, my divine Lord, and act courageously : for it behooves the high to work great things, and to suffer courageously most severe and difficult trials ; your pains and troubles will soon pass away, and joy and glory shall ever after succeed. And your heavenly Father is, and will be, always with you ; and will keep and preserve from harm, your blessed mother and your disciples, according to your desire."

Our most humble Lord Jesus rose up, and meekly accepted this small comfort from the angel, the Creator from the creature, reputed himself for that time even inferior to them. Therefore, he was sorrowful as man, was comforted by the angel as man, and as man prayed him to recommend him to his Father, and to the whole court of celestial spirits. And thus a third time he riseth from prayer, with his body covered with blood ; whom you may behold with inward compassion, wiping himself or bathing in the river ; all which is to be devoutly considered with sorrow and compassion, since it could not possibly be endured without great bitterness and pain.

Here we must observe, that many of the lathers and learned doctors say, that our Lord Jesus prayed in this manner, not merely for fear of his bitter passion, but chiefly through the pity and mercy which he had towards his chosen people, the Jews, lamenting that they would be lost by not believing in him, and putting him to death. For surely it was most ungrateful in them to crucify him, since he was of their race ; and was also prophesied in their law to be the true Messiahs Christ Jesus, who was to come, and who had farther showed them so many signs, and given them so many proofs of his singular love. Wherefore, as some of the holy fathers say, he prayed after this manner, saying, "O heavenly Father, if it could stand with the salvation of my brethren the Jews, and that the Gentiles might, by some other means, be converted to you, I would be glad to refuse this bitter passion ; but if otherwise it be expedient that the Jews be blinded in their malice, so that others after them may have a more perfect sight in the faith and true belief of you, then not my will but yours be fulfilled."

There was in Christ at this time four kinds of wills, viz.: The will of the flesh, which would no ways agree to suffer. The will of sensuality ; and this murmured and feared. The will of reason ; and this consented and was

obedient. And lastly, there was in him his divine will ; which commanded and passed sentence. And as he was true man, as such he suffered great anguish of spirit, and underwent a most bitter agony. Wherefore, have an inward and cordial compassion for him, and consider attentively every action of the Lord your God.

After this he came to his disciples, and said to them, “Now sleep and take your rest;” for their eyes were very heavy.

Thus the Good Shepherd was carefully watchful and vigilant over his little flock, his beloved disciples. Oh, how great was the love of our sweet Lord and Saviour towards them ! For those whom he loved, he loved to the end : so that even in his great anguish and bitter agony, he was careful in procuring their rest and quiet repose.

CHAPTER LXI

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST TAKEN AND BETRAYED BY JUDAS

IMMEDIATELY after, our blessed Lord beheld his adversaries coming with lighted torches and lanterns, and weapons to apprehend him ; and yet he would not awaken his disciples till his enemies came near to him : then he spoke and said, “ Rise, let us go ; behold he approacheth that shall betray me.” Matt. xxvi. And while he was speaking, that wicked Judas the traitor, came and approaching him, kissed him. For it is written, that it was the manner and custom of our Lord Jesus towards his disciples, that when at any time he had sent them out, at their returning again, he would receive them with a loving kiss. Wherefore the traitor went before the wicked band, and kissed him as he used to do, and said, “Hail, master.”

And here let us behold our Lord Jesus, how patiently and meekly he receives that false and treacherous kiss, from that unfaithful disciple, whose feet so lately he had vouchsafed to wash with his own hands, and whom, out of his unspeakable charity he refused not to feed with the precious food of his blessed body. Consider, likewise, how meekly he suffered himself to be taken, bound, struck, and furiously dragged away, as if he had been a thief, or the most wicked person in the world, void of power to help himself. Contemplate also the great sorrow and inward affliction he had on account of his disciples, who fled and left him in the hands of those ravenous wolves. And on the other side, consider the grief of their hearts, since the cause of their leaving him was not the perversity of their will, but the frailty of their weak nature ; for which they heartily mourn and sigh, like poor orphans, that know not what they do, or whither to go ; and their

sorrow was so much the greater, as they knew in what a barbarous manner their Lord and master would be treated and abused.

Those cruel butchers drive and pull him along as they would a beast to the slaughter, and he, like a meek lamb, not opening his mouth, patiently follows them without resistance. First, those vile wretches led him from the brook Cedron, near which place he was apprehended, towards the city of Jerusalem, and that with great haste, pain, and violence haying his blessed hands bound behind him, as if he had been some grievous malefactor ; his garments torn off, going bareheaded, and bent down, from the great haste, and the violent pain, they forced him to, in going.

When he was brought before the chief priests and scribes, that were then assembled together, expecting his coming, they were rejoiced and glad that they had apprehended him : they then began to examine him, and to ask many questions, endeavoring to ensnare him ; they procured false witnesses against him, spit in his sacred face, blinded his eyes, buffeted and derided him, saying, “Tell us who it was that struck thee.” Thus many and different ways they afflicted and tormented him, and in all he gave us most singular examples of patience.

At length the chief judges rose up and departed, having ordered him to be kept in custody under a loft, in the nature of a prison, where they bound him to a pillar of stone, as those say who have seen it, leaving a guard of armed men with him for greater security ; who, during the whole night, abused and derided him with many opprobrious and reproachful speeches, saying, “Do you believe yourself to be better or more wise than our learned magistrates ? Or can you imagine that they understand not the law and religion much better than you ? How foolish do you appear in taking upon you to reprehend and teach them, against whom you should not have presumed to open your lips. Wherefore now your wisdom appears, in being obliged to suffer that which all such as you truly deserve ; you are truly worthy of death, and it would be a pity that you should escape it.” Thus the whole night, sometimes one, and sometimes another, both with scurrilous language and wicked works, continually reviled and abused him. And our blessed Lord, with bashful and modest countenance, patiently bore it all, and was silent to every scornful word they said against him ; but with his eyes modestly inclined toward the ground, made no answer, as if he had been guilty, and worthy of blame. O most amiable Lord, into whose hands

are you come ? This is truly the hour, and power of darkness, and with what patience do you suffer it !

Thus stood our blessed Redeemer, bound to that pillar, till the next morning. In the meantime John, who had followed him to the high priest's house, went to the Blessed Virgin, to Mary Magdalen, and other devout people who were at that time assembled at Mary Magdalen's house, where Our Lord made that memorable supper the night before, and related to them all that had happened to our Lord and his disciples ; which when they had heard, they were seized with unspeakable grief, and wept most bitterly. Consider them attentively, and have compassion on them, for they are now in the greatest grief and affliction that ever they were in for their Lord, for they now plainly see and know full well that he will be taken from them and put to a cruel death. Our blessed Lady retired alone to prayer, and said, "O most sovereign, most high, and most merciful Father, I present myself before your majesty, to recommend to your protection my dearly beloved son. O gracious Father, reveal to me whether my son Jesus shall be put to death or not. Be not severe to him, O bountiful Father, who to all others art so good and merciful ; for he knows no sin, nor ever committed any evil. O most just Father, if you require his death for the redemption of the world, I beseech you, if possible, to find out some other means whereby to accomplish your design, and that my blessed son's life may be spared, if it be your holy will. And he, out of obedience to you, has abandoned himself into the hands of his enemies, and will not attempt to deliver himself from their power. Wherefore, I beseech you, O heavenly Father, to help him, and to deliver him to me again out of their wicked hands." Thus, or in words to this effect, our blessed Lady prayed for her son in the profound sorrow and grief of her soul, wherefore we ought to accompany her in her anguish, and be moved with compassion towards her in her great affliction.

CHAPTER LXII

OUR BLESSED LORD IS CARRIED BEFORE PILATE ; SCOURGED AT THE PILLAR, AND CROWNED WITH THORNS

EARLY next morning, the elders and chiefs of the people returned and caused Jesus to be bound, and led with his hands fastened behind him ; and thus hand- cuffed, brought him to Pilate, mocking, reviling and insulting him with the most abusive taunts, as he proceeded on the way. Thus went this innocent Lamb, in the guise of a malefactor, hurried by the merciless butchers to unmerited slaughter. As he was going on his way, his blessed mother, St. John, and the holy women who accompanied the virgin, who had left their humble retirement so early on purpose to come to his assistance and comfort, met him at the turn of a street : and what tongue can express the bitter anguish of their souls, at the sad sight of their Lord thus hurried along by an insulting and abusive mob ? Or what degree of inbred grief can figure the excess of mutual sorrow this interview begot on both sides ? Our Lord could not but suffer extremely through the compassion he felt for his beloved followers, and chiefly for his mother. For he knew full well the bitter grief they felt for him, sufficient to tear their bleeding souls from their convulsed bodies.

He was then brought before Pilate, and the holy women followed at a distance, the thronging rabble not suffering them to approach nearer. Many accusations were laid against him to Pilate, but he, finding all to be groundless, and desirous to rid himself of so odious a prosecution, dispatched him to Herod. Herod was much pleased at this, hoping by this

means to see a miracle wrought by Christ ; but he could not obtain the least gratification of this sort from Christ, who thought him unworthy even to hear a word from his sacred mouth. Hence, Herod, looking upon him as an idiot, caused him to be clothed in a white garment, the usual habit of fools in those days, and thus, in derision, sent him back to Pilate. So that Christ patiently bore to be reputed both a fool and a malefactor by all, without deserving the title of either from any one. Contemplate him, then, as he is led backwards and forwards, with his eyes modestly depressed, hearing the shouts and taunts, receiving the buffets, spitting, and perhaps filth thrown at him by rude populace, without murmur or complaint ; cast a pitying eye upon him in this sad plight, and with him compassionate his afflicted mother and beloved disciples, who follow him as closely as the mob will permit, till they reach the palace of Pilate. Here again he is loaded by the savage brutes with false accusations, which they utter with the utmost impudence and inveteracy. Yet Pilate, finding in him nothing that bore the appearance of guilt, sought means to free him from their hands. Wherefore he says, “I will punish, and then dismiss him.” O Pilate ! do you presume to chastise your Lord and Sovereign ? Surely you are beside yourself thus to dare to inflict stripes on him who is as guiltless of stripes as of death. Oh, how much more wisely had you acted to chastise yourself by his admonition ! Pilate, however, was besotted enough to order him to be most inhumanly scourged.

By his order therefore, our most innocent Lord was stripped naked, bound to a pillar, and inhumanly scourged. Thus was that innocent Lamb, and that most beautiful among the children of men, shamefully exposed, naked and abashed, before the whole populace ; and received with invincible patience the cruel stripes of his barbarous executioners. So that the most beautiful flower of human nature, and the fairest and most delicate of all flesh, was covered with stripes, wounds and bruises, insomuch that from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, his most precious blood ran, flowing from all parts of his sacred body, in abundance upon the ground, being so long scourged and beaten that they added wound to wound, bruise to bruise, and stripe to stripe till at length, the inhuman spectators being weary of beholding any longer what the cruel butchers themselves were wholly tired of, he was ordered to be unbound. He was

then loosed from the pillar, on which the stains of his precious blood are still to be seen, as many authentic historians affirm.

Here, pious reader, let me entreat you to dwell some time on this subject, and attentively consider, with heart full of sorrow and compassion, the extremity of his bitter pains ; and if you find not your heart moved, or even melted with grief and compunction at the sufferings of your blessed Lord, you may conclude that it is more hard and impenetrable than stone. It was then fulfilled of him, what the prophet Isaiah had long before prophesied, saying, “We have seen him, and there was neither form nor beauty left, and we esteemed him as a leper, and as one smitten by God, and humbled. ‘ ‘ O sweet Jesus, who dared to be so bold as to presume to strip you of your garments ? Who was it that dared with more assurance to bind you to the pillar I And who, most audacious of all, could presume to beat and scourge you in that cruel manner? But you, O most bright sun of righteousness ! you, I say, who withdrew the resplendent beams of your glory, and who vouchsafed to hide your power and might, so that darkness, and the power of darkness reigned for a time, and your enemies appeared, by your divine permission, more powerful than yourself. It was the excess of your love, and the greatness of our iniquity, which disarmed you of your strength in this conflict. But accursed be that malice which caused you to be thus cruelly tormented.

After this they led him round the place to seek for his clothes, which were scattered about in different parts, some in one place, and some in another, by those barbarous executioners who had stripped him. Here ought tenderness move us to compassion towards him, thus afflicted and trembling with cold ; for as the gospel tells us, the weather was sharp and piercing. As he was clothing himself again, some of the wicked populace went to Pilate, and said, “ This man said, he was king, wherefore, let us clothe him after our manner, and crown him as such.” Then taking him aside, they clothed him in a purple garment : and plating a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and with violence pressed them into his sacred temples ; giving him a reed instead of a sceptre, they kneeled down and saluted him in derision, saying, “Hail, king of the Jews.” To all which Jesus made no answer : and like a meek and patient lamb, opened not his mouth. Here behold with melting heart, how often they strike him upon the head to drive the piercing thorns more deeply into his sacred temples, so that they

forced the blood from every part, which running down in great abundance, covered his blessed face. Consider how he behaves in every action, and how patiently he bears every insult which they offer to him ; they deride and mock him as one who would make himself king, without power to effect it. He is clothed in purple, carries a crown of thorns on his head, holds a reed in his “hand, and they on their knees, salute him in derision as king, and he is silent, and murmurs not. But, oh miserable and wicked wretches ! how dreadful shall that blessed head appear at the last day, which now you beat and abuse so inhumanly ! Neither was all they had hitherto done sufficient to weaken their malice against him ; but to add more to his reproach, they brought into the house many of the mob to gaze on him after which they led him out to Pilate, and showed him to the whole multitude ; having on his purple garment, his crown of thorns, and a sceptre of a reed in his hand. In this manner stood that innocent lamb, with his eyes modestly depressed before that great multitude, who scoffed and derided him, and with the loudest shouts exclaimed against him, crying out to Pilate, “Crucify him, crucify him.”

CHAPTER LXIII

OUR BLESSED LORD JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO SUFFER A CRUEL DEATH ON THE CROSS, AND COMPELLED TO CARRY THE SAME TO MOUNT CALVARY

OUR blessed Lord Jesus having been many ways shamefully reviled, mocked and abused, and having suffered many cruel torments among them, the chief men of the Jews continually sought his death, and stirred up the whole multitude to join them, and to importune Pilate to have him crucified. At length that wicked judge, fearing more to incur their displeasure than to condemn the innocent, passed sentence of death upon him. Then were the Scribes and Pharisees full of joy, that they had accomplished their designs, and attained their wicked ends against him. They remembered not the benefits they had received from him, nor the miracles he had wrought among them ; they neither pitied him for his innocence, nor were they moved at the cruelty and baseness of the action they were going to commit ; and instead of ceasing from their wicked purpose, in consideration of the great affliction, sufferings, and reproaches they had already inflicted upon him, they rejoiced and were glad that their designs were now near their execution. Wherefore, they revile, mock, and insult him, who is the true and eternal God, and hasten, as much as possible, his death. He is again carried back to the house, stripped of his mock purple garment, and left naked before them. Pause here a moment, and attentively consider the make and form of his sacred body : and that you may be moved to inward compassion

towards him. and feed your soul with devout contemplation, close your eyes for a while to his divinity, and consider him as purely man, and you will behold the most lovely, fair, innocent, and beautiful among the sons of men in that doleful condition, full of wounds and bruises, covered with blood, naked and abashed, seeking and gathering together his garments, which were dispersed in different parts of the house, by those cruel and merciless brutes, and clothing himself before them, whilst they stand insulting and reviling him, as if he had been the most contemptible of all creatures, forsaken by God, and destitute of all help and comfort. Then consider the profound and wonderful meekness of him as God and man ; behold how that immense, eternal, and incomprehensible majesty stoops to the ground, collects his torn garments, and bashfully clothes himself before his enemies, as though he was the vilest of men, their bought slave, under their dominion, and by them chastised as a base and unpardonable criminal. After this, accompany him out, and behold how, after he has put on his clothes, they hurry him away, and load him with the heavy wood of the cross, which, as historians say, measured fifteen feet in length ; this the most meek and innocent Lamb took and bore upon his blessed shoulders ; and thus was hurried along by an enraged mob, in company with two thieves, who were condemned to death ; these were his companions in suffering.

Oh, sweet and beloved Jesus, how much do these your enemies debase you, by making you a companion with thieves ! And what is still worse, they compel you to carry your own cross, which is a burden they imposed not upon them. Wherefore, as the prophet Isaiah saith, “You are not only numbered with evil doers, but are used worse than they. Your patience, O Lord, is unspeakable.” And now, devout Christians, with all possible attention and devotion, observe our Lord Jesus, how he bends under the weight of the cross, vehemently sighing, and wearied. Take pity on him in this sad plight of renewed afflictions and calumnies.

His blessed and afflicted mother, seeing that she could not get near him, on account of the great concourse of people which pressed about him, went, with St. John and the rest of her companions, a nearer way, to the end that she might meet him at the winding of the street. And when she perceived him coming, bowed down with the heavy load of the cross, which before she had not seen, she was like one beside herself, and half dead with grief,

so that she could neither speak to him, nor he to her, by reason of the furious mob which hurried him along with great violence and compulsion. After, however, he had gone a little way, he turned to the women that followed, weeping, and said: "Ye daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children," etc., as is farther contained in the gospel. And in these two places were erected two churches in memory of these things, as they report who have been there, and seen them. And as Mount Calvary was distant from the city, he was so tired and faint, that he was not able to carry his cross the whole way, but fell down under it with exhaustion. The wicked executioners, not willing to defer his death, lest Pilate should revoke his sentence, as he had before shown some inclination to release him, compelled one Simon, a stranger, to carry it for him, and Jesus they led unburdened the rest of the way, but bound like a thief to the place of execution.

Now, if we attentively consider all that hath been done to our Lord Jesus, and the many things he hath suffered from the time he was first apprehended to this present, we shall doubtless find therein great matter of sorrow and compunction. For we may truly believe, that from the hour in which he was first taken in the night, till the time of his being crucified, he was in one continual combat, and endured numberless reproaches and injuries, sorrows and detractions innumerable and suffered the most cruel torments among them. For there was no manner of rest given to him but continual trouble and vexation. And here you may dwell, devout reader, for some short review of that which hitherto hath been acted against him : first, how one lays violent hands upon and apprehends him, another binds him tightly with cords, another blasphemes him, another spits in his sacred face, another proposes to him subtle questions in order to ensnare him, another drags him backwards and forwards from one judge to another, another blindfolds his eyes, another buffets him, another strips him of his clothes, another binds him to a pillar, another most cruelly scourges him, another unbinds him and clothes him in a purple garment, another plats a crown of thorns which he presses upon his head, another puts a reed into his hand, another takes it from him, and striking him with it upon the head, drives the thorns further in to his sacred temples, another kneels down before him and mocks him, and so of the rest, sometimes one, and sometimes another. Now they lead him to Annas, now to Caiphas, then to Pilate, and thence to Herod

; now hither, and then thither, now out, and then in again. And finally, he was dragged and hurried along with great violence, and without rest, till he came to Mount Calvary, which was the place fixed for the period of this doleful combat

CHAPTER LXIV

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

WHEN our blessed Lord Jesus was now come to Mount Calvary, those wicked and merciless butchers began then to effect their cruel work. Be present now with all the attention of your mind to these things, and devoutly consider every particular relating to the Lord your God. Behold with the interior eyes of your soul, some preparing the cross*. some making ready the ropes and cords to bind him, some the nails and hammers to fasten him, others preparing the ladder and other instruments, some digging the hole in the earth to fix the cross in, and others busy in stripping him, so that this is the third time of his being stripped, by which his wounds are again renewed by the violent tearing off his clothes, which were cleaving to his sacred flesh. His blessed mother, when she beheld him thus used, was afflicted beyond expression. And oh, how full of bitter anguish, indeed, may we well imagine, was her tender soul, in beholding her beloved and innocent son thus shamefully abused, and loaded with injuries and insults. Then was he extended upon the cross, as it lay upon the ground, and with cords stretching forth with violence his sacred hands and feet, the cruel slaughterers with long iron nails barbarously piercing them, nailed him fast to it.

Thus was our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ fastened to the cross, hand and foot, and so excessively strained thereon, that as the royal prophet saith : “ All his bones might be numbered : ” and his sacred blood ran forth in streams from his blessed wounds in great abundance : and his arms and legs were so widely stretched with the nails, that he could move no part of his body, except his head. And as his whole weight was supported only by three

nails, his pains undoubtedly were great beyond what any heart can conceive, or tongue express. But still to add insult to the pangs he suffered, he was crucified between two thieves, and loaded with derision, contempt, and reviling from all parts. Some blasphemed him, others shook their heads, and said, “ Fie on thee, thou art he that would st destroy the temple of God, and build it up again in three days. Others he saved, himself he cannot save ; and if thou be the Son of God descend now from the cross, that we may believe.” And those who crucified him, divided Ms garments among them before his face. All this was acted in the presence of his afflicted mother, who stood under the cross, and whose tender compassion and tears added much to his sorrow and affliction ; for she accompanied him in her soul on the cross, and inwardly desired rather to die with him, than to live any longer without him. Thus stood the doleful mother beside the cross of her son. She never turned her eyes from him she was afflicted and full of anguish with him ; and with many bitter sighs prayed to her heavenly Father, saying, “ Oh, heavenly Father, and sovereign Lord of majesty without doubt it was foreseen and pleasing to you from all eternity, that my most beloved and innocent son should shed his precious blood, and be crucified for the sins of the world, wherefore it is not proper to ask him of you again. But, most holy Father, you see the bitter torment and anguish of his soul, wherefore I beseech you to ease his pain, and release him. if it be your heavenly will.”

And her blessed son secretly prayed to his Father for her, saying, “Oh good Father, look down, I beseech you, on my afflicted mother, and -behold how deeply she is tormented for me : my crucifixion is sufficient for the sins of mankind ; she hath not deserved any such thing, and yet she is with me in heart upon the cross, and bears an equal share with me in my pains. I recommend her to you, beseeching that it would please you to assuage and lessen her grief.”

There were also with our blessed Lady the beloved disciple, St. John, and Mary Magdalen, and the two sisters of our Lady, Mary of James., and Mary of Salome, and other friends, standing under the cross, who all, but especially Mary Magdalen, the beloved of Jesus, were very sorrowful, and wept bitterly, and could no ways be comforted, because of the pains of their beloved master: for their sorrow was renewed with “his, in the words, or deeds, which Were said or done to him.

CHAPTER LXV

THE WORDS WHICH OUR LORD SPOKE WHILE HANGING UPON THE CHOSS : HE YIELDS UP HIS SPIRIT

OUR Lord Jesus hanging on the cross, ceased not to do, and to speak those things which were for our advantage, even to the last moment in which he gave up his spirit ; wherefore he spoke seven times, as is written in the Gospel. The first time he spoke was when he prayed for his enemies, saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” wonderful patience, charity, and benignity!

The second was to his mother, when he said, “ Woman, behold thy son ;” and to John, “ behold thy mother.” He would not call her at that time mother, lest the tenderness of the expression should have occasioned her more grief.

The third was to the good thief saying, “This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.” In which words he showed his infinite and unbounded mercy towards us.

The fourth was when he said, “Mi, Eli, Lamma sabadhani” That is to say, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!” As if he had more plainly said: “My God, you have so much loved the world, that while you give me to death for its redemption, you seem to have forsaken me.”

The fifth was when he said, “Sitio;” I thirst ! Which word gave occasion to his enemies to rejoice, and to his mother greater occasion of compassion. And although this word may be understood of thirst for the salvation of souls : yet he truly thirsted for drink ; for by the great effusion of his blood, he had little moisture left within him. Wherefore his cruel butchers, who

were studying how they might torment him, took vinegar mixed with gall, and put it to his mouth, that he might drink.

The sixth was when he said, “ Consummatum est ;” It is finished ! As if he had said, “ O Father, I have perfectly and obediently fulfilled all the commands you gave me, and all that has hitherto been written of me : wherefore, now, if it pleaseth thee, receive me again to thyself.” To which, we may for devotion’s sake imagine, his Father replied, “ Come, my beloved Son, for you have fulfilled all things completely, and I will not that you suffer any more ; come then and resign your soul into my arms, and repose yourself forever in my bosom.”

And then our blessed Jesus began to fail in his sight, after the nature of dying men, and grew faint and languid, sometimes closing and sometimes opening his eyes ; and bowing his head first on one side, and then on the other, till being quite spent, and life failing, he recommended his soul to his Father, cry out with a loud voice, the seventh time, saying, ‘Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.’ With which he yielded up the ghost.

At this strong and vehement cry of our Lord Jesus, a centurion who was standing by was converted, and immediately said, “Verily, this man is the Son of God ;” because he heard him cry so loud when he expired.

Oh, in what a sad and sorrowful condition may we well suppose was the tender heart of his blessed mother, when she beheld him to languish in so painful a manner, to cry out, and to die in her presence ! We may easily believe that her spirits failed her, and that she was ready to give up the ghost with him, much more than when she met him carrying his cross. And what can we think of Mary Magdalen, of St. John, his beloved disciple, and of the other two sisters of our Lady. Undoubtedly their sorrow was inexpressible, they were loaded with grief, and over whelmed with bitterness and tears, without comfort of any kind, and knew not what to do.

Behold now our Lord Jesus hangs dead upon the cross, and the multitude of people return again to the city. But his most afflicted mother, with the other four, remain still near him, feeding their souls with the divine contemplation of their beloved, and waiting for help from God, that they might have him taken from the cross, and buried.

If you also, Christian soul, will behold your Lord in devout contemplation, you cannot but conceive a tender compassion, seeing that from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot there was no part of him

left whole ; there was no member, nor any sense which had not their extreme pain and affliction. Employ thyself then in the daily study of these sufferings of thy Lord, and make them the frequent subject of thy devout meditation.

CHAPTER LXVI

THE OPENING OF OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR'S SIDE WITH A SPEAR

WHILE the blessed mother of our Lord Jesus, with St. John, St. Mary Magdalen, and the two sisters of our blessed Lady sat near the cross, with her eyes attentively fixed on her beloved son, contemplating him thus hanging dead between two thieves, forsaken and abandoned, there came many men from the city towards them ; being sent to break the legs of those who were crucified, and to kill them downright, if they were not already dead, that their bodies might not be seen hanging on the crosses upon the Sabbath-day. Our blessed Lady, with the others, rose up to look, and saw them coming, but knew not for what reason : wherefore their sorrow was renewed, and their fears increased as they saw them advance nearer. His blessed mother being more sensibly affected than the rest, and not knowing what to do, turned herself towards her beloved son, and said, “ My most dear son, to what end, I beseech thee, do these cruel butchers return hither again ? What more do they intend to do ? Have they not already taken away thy life? I was in hopes that they were satisfied with what they had done before to thee while thou wast living : But now it seems that they have not yet done with thee, but they will further pursue thee dead. I know not, my beloved son, how to act, since I am as unable of helping thee now as I was before in delivering thee from death. I will approach, however, and stand near the cross, at thy blessed feet, and beseech thy heavenly Father to render them favorable towards thee.”

Hence they all five, bitterly weeping, went and placed themselves before the cross of our Lord Jesus. And the multitude, hastily advancing, came with great shouts and noise, and seeing that the two thieves were yet living,

with great rage they broke their legs, and killed them, and taking them down, cast them into a ditch. And then returning they came to our Lord Jesus. And his blessed mother, pierced to the heart with grief, fearing they might do the same to him, in an agony of humility, kneeling down before them, with her arms extended, and with a loud and compassionate voice, spoke to them in this manner : “I beseech you, brethren, for the love of God, most High and Almighty, that you will no more afflict; or torment me in my most dear son : I am truly his most sorrowful and disconsolate mother, whom you know has never injured or offended you. And if my beloved son seemed to oppose you, you have put him to death for it. What more can your revenge require ? Forbear then to insult him any longer, and I will forgive the injuries you have hitherto done me in his death and sufferings. But oh, be thus far merciful in your cruelty ; touch not his dear corpse, but suffer me to carry it whole to the sepulchre. What will it avail you to break his limbs, who has already expired this hour past?” Thus did the sacred Virgin persist on her knees, with John and Magdalen, and the other devout women, weeping and entreating those inhuman butchers ! O sacred Lady, to what purpose do you thus demean yourself to those barbarous wretches ! Can you hope for any success with such inexorable savages ? Will pity make the impious relent ? Will the merciless give yearnings of mercy, or pride bend to humility ? Alas ! Your endeavors are ineffectual ; condescension is the aversion of the haughty.

One Longinus, at that time a proud and wicked man, but afterwards a convert, a saint, nay, a martyr, stretched forth his lance, and seeming to give ear to their cries, pierced our Lord’s sacred side, when immediately from the wound gushed forth a stream of water and blood. At the sight his disconsolate mother fell into a swoon, in the arms of Magdalen : and while St. John and the holy women were busied in supporting and restoring our blessed Lady, the impious butchers departed. And now at her recovery, a new taste of death succeeded the former, when she beheld her beloved and divine son, hanging dead on the cross in such a mangled and deplorable condition. Oh, how many strokes of death did not this spotless Lady feel on this day ! Who can doubt of their being equal in number to the insults and cruelties used to him ? And thus was fulfilled what Simeon foretold, that “the sword of sorrow should pierce her soul.” Thus did one lance, with the

same sacrilegious stroke, pierce the blessed body of Jesus and the sacred soul of Mary.

When our blessed Lady was recovered, they all sat down at the foot of the cross, at a loss what to do or how to act. How to take down and where to deposit the holy corpse they could not contrive, for want of strength and for want of a sepulchre to put it in. To depart and leave him on the cross in that condition, they knew not how to resolve, and to remain there long was neither decent nor safe, for night was coming on. What perplexity ! O bountiful God, how didst thou suffer this thy favorite, this mirror of all virtues, this our sacred advocate and protectress to be afflicted ? Surely it were time she had some respite from the excess of anguish.

CHAPTER LXVII

THE DESCENT OF OUR LORD FROM THE CROSS

AGAIN they saw several persons coming along the road : these were Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, and some persons with them, who brought instruments to take down the sacred body from the cross, and a great quantity of myrrh and aloes to embalm it. This gave them a new alarm, not knowing at a distance but they might be persons coming to offer new outrages to the blessed corpse. Wherefore, they all arose, and immediately falling on their knees, applied themselves to prayer, beseeching God to avert the affliction they seemed again threatened with. At length, however, St. John discovered who they were, and returning thanks to God, they all began to be comforted. Our blessed Lady then dispatched St. John to meet them, who brought them to the cross where the holy women were, and presented them to the afflicted mother of God. Our blessed Lady received them graciously, and with all the joy compatible with her present state of grief. Joseph and Nicodemus condoled with her and the pious company. Then all falling on their knees, adored the sacred relict of our Lord, and after some time spent in devout and humble prayer and religious homage, they all again arose and prepared to take him down from the cross.

While the holy company are busied in their devout offices to Christ, endeavor, pious reader, to be as devoutly attentive to all that passes. Two ladders then are fixed to the cross, one to each arm. And whilst Nicodemus goes up to that on the left hand, Joseph ascends the other on the right, and labors to draw the nail with which that hand is fastened. This was done not without great difficulty, and bruising the divine flesh, for the nails were of

an immoderate size. The action, however, was acceptable to God, inasmuch as it was a violence that was unavoidable and done through the utmost purity of intention and liveliness of faith. When Joseph had drawn out the nail, St. John made a sign to him to give it to him with privacy, which when he received, he hid it in his bosom, that the afflicted Virgin might not see it. Then Nicodemus extracted the nail from the left hand, and gave it likewise to St. John, who joined it devoutly with the former. When the nails were thus drawn from the hands of our blessed Redeemer, Nicodemus descended to draw out that which fastened his heavenly feet, while Joseph supported the body. Oh, thrice happy Joseph, who was deemed worthy to embrace so divine, so inestimable a treasure ! While Joseph held the sacred body leaning on his arms, our blessed Lady took hold of the hand which hung down, and pressing it reverently and tenderly to her face and lips, kissed it, pressed it, and devoutly bathed it with tears. Oh, nature, what a spectacle ! Oh, human heart, what must thou be, not to melt at such a sight ! When the nail was extracted from the feet, Joseph descended by degrees, while the others received the heavenly body of our Lord, and reposed it decently on the ground. Our blessed Lady then raised the holy head and shoulders, and placed them on her lap, and the Magdalen prostrating herself, embraced his sacred feet, whence she had once received such a plenitude of grace. All the rest stood round joining their sighs and tears, and bitterly bemoaning the only begotten Son of God, thus disfigured by base, ungrateful man.

CHAPTER LXVIII

THE EMBALMING AND BURIAL OF OUR LORD

AFTER a short space, as night was drawing on, Joseph besought our Lady to permit him to embalm and wrap up the sacred body in the fine linen he had brought with him for that purpose. But she knew not how to part with the dear treasure so soon again. "I entreat you, my friends," said she, "rob me not so soon of my dear, my only son, of all that is dear to me in this life ; rather, if you are in haste to bury him, lay me in the sepulchre near him. Oh, that I might, dearest Jesus, lie by thee, and never be separated from thee." Tears flowed down her virgin cheeks, and sobs forbid her words an utterance. Silent and sad she viewed the lovely, mangled form ; now she examined, one by one, the reeking wounds still fresh and full of clotted blood, now she picked out, with care and cruel anguish, one after another, the long and splintered thorns still buried in his temples : now she beheld his head, and now his face, composing the few straggling hairs which blinded inhumanity had left upon his head and beard ; and washing off the dirt and spittle from his divine countenance with floods of tears ; unsatiated with weeping, sighing, and gazing on the object of her anguish. Thus fixed, and immovable, the afflicted mother dwelt on the beloved form of her divine son, and was not to be removed from him, till St. John, with reverence approaching, entreated her to consider the lateness of the day, and to consent that Joseph and Nicodemus might do their pious offices in time, to prevent any insults or calumnies of the Jews. To this remonstrance the wise and humble Virgin yielded, remembering well that her dearest Jesus had recommended her to the care of this faithful and loving disciple. And therefore, without contending she gave them her blessing, and permission,

to dress and wrap him up. St. John then, with Joseph and Nicodemus, immediately embalmed the holy body and wrapped it in the fine linen cloth. While they were busied about the body, the blessed Virgin still kept the head upon her lap, and Magdalen was still officious about his feet. There knelt the illustrious penitent, almost dissolved with the excess of her grief, and now on those sacred limbs, which compunction had elsewhere bathed with her tears, unspeakable grief and tender compassion made her pour a double flood. She beheld those dear feet cruelly pierced and torn, mangled and bloody, but could not behold them clearly through the bitterness of her weeping. The Evangelist bears witness that she loved exceedingly, and therefore who can be amazed that she should grieve exceedingly, to see our Lord, whom she thus loved, and to see him thus mangled, dead, and reduced almost to nothing? Scarce could her breast contain her heart, thus enlarged with panting anguish ; nor is it improbable that, if she might, she would have gladly expired at the feet of her dead Lord. This was the ninth and last office she could pay her divine master, and in doing this, how bitterly did she grieve, that she could not do it in the manner she wished. She would fain have laid out the blessed body, anointed, and wrapped it wholly of herself, with that decency and reverence due to it. But neither the time nor place would permit it ; for she could not do more at that time, nor in a better manner, than to bathe his venerable feet with her tears, dry them with her locks, kiss them, and reverently wrap them in the linen ; this she did, and did it with a diligence equal to her affection.

When the body of our divine Saviour was wrapped up, they all turned their looks towards our blessed Lady to learn her pleasure, and share her parting grief. And she, finding there was now no more time to delay, threw her face on that of her heavenly son. “Oh, precious son Jesus ! do I still hold your dead on my lap ! And must I, must I then part from you ? cruel, unspeakable, cruel divorce of death. Sweet and delightful was our converse with each other, and free from injury or offence to any, why then do I see you, sweet offspring of my bowels, thus mangled and murdered like a public nuisance ? How faithfully, how dutifully, how tenderly did you, when alive, wait on and cherish me : yet what return was I able to make you in this dreadful conflict ! Your heavenly Father was able alone to assist you : I could not ; and he, for his ineffably divine reasons, would not. Blessed be his holy name alike for all he has done. But why, my only joy, did you

abandon yourself ? Ah ! it was for the generous love of mankind, whom you came to redeem. Alas, how dear has this redemption cost you ! Yet dear as it has been, as it redounds to your glory and their salvation, I submit to, nay, rejoice at it. And if I do grieve, forgive me, all bounteous Jesus, forgive me these tears and sighs, which surely are but due from so lovely, loving, and divine a son. How can I refrain from tears, when I behold to what a deplorable condition the sins of man have brought you ? You have neither sin nor harm in you. But now, alas! our social converse with each other is broken off. Well, since it is your will, it shall be mine; and these hands, in obedience to your divine pleasure, shall bury your sacred body. And then whither, or to whom shall I, your afflicted mother, fly for protection? How shall I live without you ? Oh, that one tomb might contain us both, that we might never be separated in body any more than in mind ! Go then, lovely Jesus ! Go to your sepulchre, and since my body may not be there entombed with yours, my soul shall still accompany you thither, and there forever dwell with you. To you, then, I offer and recommend it. Oh son, oh dearest, oh divine son, how hard is this separation !” A flood of tears followed her words, and bathed the sacred face of Christ more plentifully than those of Magdalen had bathed his feet. She wiped them off, however, and kissing his lips and eyes, wrapped up the holy head in the linen. After which all again falling on the ground, and paying their adorations, took the sacred body and bore it to the monument, our blessed Lady holding up the head, St. Mary Magdalen the feet, and the rest the body.

Near the place where our Saviour was crucified was a sepulchre, in which they buried our Lord, with reverence, tears, sighs, and adorations. After he was laid in the monument, the afflicted mother embraced him, and clung to him for awhile ; but St. John and the women raised her, and rolled a great stone against the entrance of the monument. Venerable Bede tells us, that this monument was a kind of round mansion, hewn out of a rock beneath, so high that a man could not reach, with his arm perpendicularly raised, to the roof of it. Its entrance stood eastward : and in it our Lord’s body was placed in a tomb, on the north side, of seven feet long.

CHAPTER LXIX

OUR BLESSED LADY'S DEPARTURE FROM THE SEPULCHRE, AND RETURN TO MOUNT SION

WHEN Joseph of Arimathea had completed his office of burying our Saviour, and was about returning to Jerusalem, he came to the Blessed Virgin, and entreated her, with many solicitations, to retire to his house, with the companions and sharers in her grief, offering it, and all he was master of, to her service and command. But our blessed Lady graciously returning him thanks, excused herself from going thither, because she was committed by her son to the care of his beloved disciple John ; who, when Joseph turned to him to beseech him to prevail upon her to honor his house with her sacred presence, told them all, that he must lead her immediately to Mount Sion, the place where Jesus had but the night before supped with his disciples, and where he himself proposed to remain with her. Upon which, they forthwith adored at the sepulchre, and after paying their submission to the holy virgin, and their respects to her company, they went their way ; but our blessed Lady, St. John, and the devout women remained sometime longer opposite to the sepulchre.

At length St. John remonstrating to our blessed Lady, that it was neither safe to remain there late at night, nor decent to enter the city much later in the day, she humbly arose, and kneeling before the sepulchre, embraced it, saying, “ Farewell, my dearest, best-beloved son ; since I may not, must not stay longer near you, I recommend you to your eternal Father's all-wise and almighty care.” Then lifting her eyes to heaven, with abundance of tears, and heart full of grief, said, “ To you, O eternal Father, I recommend this

dear deposit of your and my only begotten son. Oh, take under your protection, and guard from every insult his precious body, and with it accept my soul, which I here leave together with it.” Then rising, she departed with her companions from the monument.

When they came again to the cross, she kneeled down and adored, saying, “Here died my dear, my precious son ; here he poured out the generous sea of blood for man’s redemption.*” And after her example all did the same. Nor is it without good grounds that we may believe our blessed Lady to have been the first reverer of the cross. When they approached the city, the women veiled her like a widow, wailing, distressed, and afflicted before her, whilst she proceeded with her head and face quite covered, between St. John and St. Mary Magdalen. At their entrance into it, a pious contention arose between Magdalen and St. John ; she pleading hard that our blessed Lady might come to reside at her house, alleging the goodness with which our Lord had honored her in his life- time in resorting to it ; he on the other hand, being desirous of leading the sacred virgin to Mount Sion, where he said she would be safer, and more within the reach of all their friends. Accordingly our blessed Lady determined to go thither, and Magdalen followed her. As they passed through the city many devout persons of both sexes met her, condoled with her, and cried aloud against the injustice done to her divine son, as they accompanied her to the house whither she was repairing. When she arrived at the place where she was to remain, turning to her attendants, she returned them thanks, and they submissively bowing, paid her homage and condolence. Our Lady was followed by her two sisters and Magdalen into the house : after which St. John, placing himself at the door, returned thanks to the rest, and on account of the lateness of the evening, dismissed them. But with eyes disconsolate did this childless mother look round the house, where she could no more see the object of all her delight. “ O fair and beauteous, O lovely son !” she said, “where art thou now ? O John ! where is my only son ? O Magdalen ! where is thy master, that more than parent, who loved thee so tenderly ? O beloved sisters ! where is my Jesus ? Every joy is now fled from me every sweetness, every pleasing sight now vanishes from my eyes now he is no more before me. Alas, alas, what agonies he suffered ! Alas, how my grief augments whenever I look back and consider him all torn, all bruised, disfigured, sighing, panting, and fainting with thirst, anguish, and violence !

What insults, what torments, and what taunts did he not go through ! And I, in vain, wished to comfort him His foes inhumanly abused him his friends meanly and shamefully forsook him his poor, his tender mother, wanted power to help him and his Father, his Almighty Father, would not rescue him. And with what haste was he not hurried to the cruel, inhumanly cruel, unnaturally cruel slaughter ! What wretch so vile was ever condemned, and executed with so much injustice, barbarity, and precipitation, as my poor innocent, inoffensive son, Jesus ! Oh, my son ! in this last and unhappiest of nights wast thou basely betrayed, inhumanly seized, perfidiously condemned, and now cruelly crucified, thou liest unjustly murdered ! dearest Jesus ! how bitter is this separation from thee and how insupportable the sad reflection on thy undeserved, ignominious death !” Thus went on this tender, this afflicted mother, till St. John at length besought her to desist from her excessive grief, and administered comfort to her. Do you, amidst your pious contemplation, wish to do the like, devout reader ; obey her, minister to her, and attend and comfort her ; join with St. John in preparing something for her refection, and for those who are with her, who are all fasting and faint. And when you have indulged yourself awhile in this pious, spiritual officiousness, procure the virgin’s blessing, and depart.

CHAPTER LXX

MEDITATION ON OUR BLESSED LADY'S CONVERSATION WITH HER DEVOUT COMPANIONS

ON the morning of the Sabbath, they all remained in the house with the doors shut, extremely afflicted, and mourning like orphans for the loss of a tender parent, without uttering a syllable, but looking dejectedly on each other, as is usual on occasions of extreme grief, and supplying their want of words with abundant sighs. While thus they sit distressed, a sudden knocking at the door alarms and dismays them, for all courage is departed from them ; but John going to the door, finds it to be Peter, and removes their fears by acquainting them with it. Peter, with the sacred virgin's leave, being admitted, full of confusion, anguish and repentance, approaches, but without being able to utter a word. After him came, one by one, the rest of the disciples, weeping and abashed. At length, when their tears and sighs are abated, they begin to talk of their deceased Lord. "O how I blush from my soul," says Peter, "and how well my confused conscience tells me, that I am unworthy to speak in your presence, sacred Lady, or even to be seen by mankind, after having so shame fully denied and forsaken my divine Master, who loved me to so great a degree !" In like manner all the other disciples, with tears, beating their breasts, and in deep sorrow, accused themselves for having abandoned their Lord in his passion. But the gracious virgin mother consoled them, saying, "Alas! my children, you and my bountiful master, and faithful shepherd, has now departed from us for awhile and left us like orphans without a parent. However, I finally trust to his goodness, that he will soon be with us again. And you know how good

and indulgent he is, and how much he loves you all. Despair not then, but confidently rely on his goodness for your reconciliation, and depend on his pardon for every fault and offence you have hitherto committed against him ; for he knows full well the frailty of your nature, and the greatness of the temptation. By his Almighty Father's permission, such was the fury and outrage of his enemies, that your staying with him could not have been of service to him : therefore, be not discouraged." "Truly, O benign Lady," says Peter, " thus far what you say I hope will in some measure alleviate my offence : it was the very fury you speak of which so terrified me as to make me think myself in danger of falling a victim to it ; and that terror it was which made me so shamefully deny my Lord. Nor did I at the instant reflect on the words by which he foretold this denial." Magdalen then inquiring concerning the prediction of our Lord, Peter told her the circumstances of it, and added, that our Lord told them many things at his last supper. Upon which, our blessed Lady desiring to be informed of all the particulars of what her divine son had done and said on that occasion, Peter made a sign to John, and John related the whole particulars. And then, as well concerning this as other occasions, they related among themselves, several things which Christ had taught and practised among them, and thus they passed the whole day in talking of him. O how attentively did Magdalen, and much more our blessed Lady, listen to all this ! O how often did she that day cry out, "Blessed forever be my holy son, Jesus." Behold then diligently, and compassionate them in the extreme affliction, with which this day overwhelms them. For what a sight was it to behold the queen of Heaven and earth, the princes of the holy church and the director of Christ's people, seized with so great sorrow, and forced to hide themselves in that little house, not knowing what to do, having nothing to comfort them, but only to communicate together, and repeat the former sayings and actions of their divine Lord and master, Jesus. Our blessed Lady, however, remained with a peaceful and serene mind, being always firm and constant in the certain hope of her son's resurrection ; in which hope she persisted the whole Sabbath ;* for which reason the Sabbath is a day specially dedicated by the church to her. Her comfort, however, was not wholly free from grief, whenever she thought on the bitter death and sufferings of her blessed son.

Now when the sun was gone down, and it was lawful for them to work, Mary Magdalen, and the other Mary that was with her, went out to buy

certain sweet spices to make ointment to anoint the body. For the night before, after they came from the sepulchre, they began to make things ready for

* The Sabbath here meant is the Jewish Sabbath, which corresponds to our Saturday.

it till sunset ; after which time they ceased : for, according to the law, they were obliged to keep the Sabbath, from sunset the evening before, till the setting of the same on the Sabbath evening. Behold them now, how they go with sorrowful and mournful countenances, and apply to some devout good man for the spices they had occasion for: and he, tenderly compassionating their affliction, willingly supplied them. Wherefore, choosing the best they could find, they returned home, and applied themselves to compound a precious ointment, after the best manner they were able. Cast an eye towards them, and behold how they labor for our Lord Jesus: weeping, sighing, and sorrowful ! Our blessed Lady and the Apostles stood looking on, and no doubt, when needful, assisted them ; which done, and night being come, they ceased, and retired to repose, which, we may piously imagine, was very little.

CHAPTER LXXI

OUR LORD JESUS DESCENDS INTO THE LIMBO OF THE FATHERS

WE are now to consider what our blessed Lord did on this day of the Sabbath. You are to know, then, that as soon as he expired, his blessed soul descended into that part of hell called Limbo, where the souls of the Fathers were detained, and there he remained with them. During which time they were in possession of glory ; for the vision of God is the perfect glory of the blessed. Oh, how great was his bounty ; how great his love, and how great his humility ! He could, if he had pleased, have delivered his servants by means of an angelical messenger, who might have conducted them to his presence, in whatever place he had chosen ; but this, his infinite love and humility would not suffer him to do. Wherefore, he himself descended ; and, though Lord of all, visited them, not as servants, but as intimate and familiar friends, and remained with them, till near break of day the Sunday following. Think well on this, and endeavor to copy after so great a pattern.

The holy Fathers were in an ecstasy of immense joy at the approach of their Redeemer. All anxiety then gave place to ineffable delight ; and their petitions and solicitations, for a speedy deliverance from this state of captivity, were changed into praises and thanksgiving, for the inexpressible benefit of their redemption. When, therefore, the soul of Jesus advanced towards them, imagine you see the holy tribe assembled together, hastening with transports of the most earnest alacrity to meet him, and crying out to him, “ Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, because he has visited, and wrought the redemption of his people.” “ Raise up your drooping heads, O afflicted fellow captives, for behold your redemption is coming. Rise up, rise up, O Jerusalem, break the chain from off your neck ; behold the

Saviour comes to ransom us from our fetters.” “ Lift up your gates, O princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in.” “We adore you, Christ, and we bless you, our most loving God.” And thus falling down, they adored him with unspeakable joy and gratitude. Thus did they continue in praise and thanksgiving, before our Lord, till the dawn of the third day : at which time our Lord, heading those happy souls, led them glorious and triumphant, from that subterraneous place of their captivity, to that earthly paradise of delights, where those glorious prophets of God, Elias and Enoch, are waiting the coming of Antichrist, whom they are appointed to oppose. Here our blessed Redeemer staid some time with them ; and here they still persisted, in conjunction with those two venerable men, in praising, thanking and glorifying their all-gracious benefactor. At length our Saviour said, that it was time for him to leave them, and to depart, and resume his sacred body, by a glorious resurrection. “Go then,” say they, “O divine, O bounteous Redeemer, O King of Glory ! complete the merciful work you have so graciously begun, and so divinely carried on ; but oh, vouchsafe speedily to return to us, that our joy may be redoubled in the desirable sight of your sacred body, which we have so long and so earnestly desired, and sighed after.”

You see then, O devout reader, that you need not want matter for pious meditation during the interval between our Lord’s death and resurrection. Hitherto I have made but few and short meditations on the passion of Christ, that the mind might not be taken off from attending to the series of his sufferings ; but now it will not be improper to make some serious reflections concerning it. Hear, therefore, what St. Bernard says : “What think you, O Christian soul? Can you owe anything less than your whole life to Christ, who generously laid down his precious life for you, and bore the most excruciating torments to free you from bearing them to all eternity ? Were the lives of all the sons of Adam, the splendor of the angels, and the worth of the whole creation, to be united in one living creature, yet would such a creature be nothing in comparison with his body so stupendously beautiful. Were all the excellent talents of every animated being to be centered in one, what would they be to the superior virtues assembled in his conception from the Holy Ghost, in his birth from a virgin, in the innocence of his life, in the elegance of his doctrine, in the brilliancy of his miracles, in the revelation of his sacraments and mysteries! Were all the torments

which nature can suffer to be inflicted on one being, yet would they be nothing in value to what he went through in the series of his life, passion and death. The heavens then are not so high exalted above the earth as his ways are above ours, and his life above our life. Nay, a mere nothing, an unexisting nothing, bears as great a proportion to something, as our life does to his. Nothing can be more excellent than this, nothing is more miserable than that. Our life is all corruption, his life purity itself : ours of no worth, his of immense value. And yet he grudged not to lay down that precious life, to save us from eternal death. O excess of goodness ! When therefore we have devoted to him our life, and all that is valuable in it, we still fall short of what he has done for us, and our offering is no more to be compared to his, than the twinkling light of the remotest star to the lustre of the sun, the least drop of water to a great river, a pebble to an enormous mountain, or a grain of wheat to a summer's harvest.

“ It was not of trivial matters, that this blessed Redeemer stripped himself for you. He lowered himself, and that not a little, to exalt you : he lowered himself to flesh, he lowered himself to death, and the death of the cross. who can express this excess of humility, meekness, and condescension in the God of majesty, deigning to put on flesh, to be punished with death, to be disgraced with a cross? Perhaps it may be asked : but could not the Creator have repaired the works of his own hands, without all this difficulty ? Doubtless, he could ; but he chose to do otherwise, though to his own cost ; that the base and detestable crime of ingratitude might no more take root in the heart of man. He suffered, therefore, an immensity of hardships, to stimulate man to pay him the just debt of immense love ; and to move him, whom the facility of his creation had rendered ungrateful and indevout, to be grateful and earnest in thanksgiving for his redemption, which was wrought with so much difficulty. How did ungrateful man reason upon his creation ! I was made indeed out of nothing, gratis, but I was made without any expense or labor to my Maker : he said the word, and I was made like all other beings. But now, ‘ the mouth of them that speak lies was stopped.’ And now, O man, the immense cost which God has been at in redeeming you, is as apparent as noon-day sun. Your Redeemer, to ransom you, disdained not becoming, from a sovereign Lord, an humble servant, from infinitely rich, extremely poor, from the immortal word, mortal flesh, from the Son of God, the son of man.

“Consider yourself rightly then, and remember that if you were made of nothing, you were not redeemed with nothing. In six days God created all things, and you among the rest : but he was three and thirty years upon earth, laboring and working your redemption. O how hard did he toil, bearing the necessities of the flesh, the anxieties and tribulations of the spirit, and all the severe trials his enemies could put him to ! Did he not heap to himself all the horrors of death, . and aggravate those horrors with the ignominy of the cross? “O how amiable, lovely Jesus, how amiable to me above all things, does thy chalice render thee ! that chalice, that bitter, bitter draught which thou vouchsafed to drink for our redemption ! This, this demands, and justly demands, all our affections : this alone ought to engross all our love : this alone should suffice sweetly to attract, justly to win, closely to knit, and forcibly to captivate us to thee. You see then, pious reader, that the author of nature was at no expense in the fabric of the world, in comparison with what it cost the Redeemer of nature to restore it. He only spoke, and the former was made he only gave his orders, and it was created. But in the latter, his word was contradicted, his actions reprimanded, he was insulted with torments, was punished with death, and reviled with the cross.

“It was the height of infinite goodness in Christ to deliver up his life a prey to death for us ; and to pay down from out of his own sacred side, the full ransom due to his eternal Father. In this, how truly did he fulfil what the Psalmist sung of him ‘ With the Lord is mercy, and with him plentiful redemption.’ Plentiful, indeed, was this redemption, to effect which he poured forth not a single drop, not from one part of his body, but rivers of blood, from several parts. Think then, O man, on the greatness of your obligation ; think on the debt of love you owe him. What is it he should have done, and has not done for you? He has enlightened you, when blind ; unbound you, when in chains ; set you right, when astray ; and reconciled you, when guilty. Who then can forbear running willingly and cheerfully after him who delivers us from errors, and connives at our frailties, who gives us, whilst living, the means to merit, and bestows on us in death, the reward of the merit he gives? What excuse can any one plead for not running after the fragrant odor of his ointment? Not surely that the fragrancy of it did not reach him. The odor of his sweet-scented life has gone through the whole earth. For the whole earth is full of his mercy, and

the effects of his mercy surpass all his other works. He therefore who is insensible to, or follows not this fragrant odor, is either totally dead, or totally corrupted.

“ The holy spouse in the canticles is not ashamed of the blackness she borrowed from her spouse, to resemble whom, is the summit of true glory. There is nothing more glorious than to put on the blackness of reproach, which Christ himself put on. Hence, says the Apostle, with salutary transport, ‘ Far be it from me to glory in anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ How dear ought the ignominy of the cross to be to all those who are so happy as not to be at variance with him who suffered on it for our sakes ? There is a blackness in it, we must own, but that blackness is beautiful, insomuch as it was the form and likeness of our Lord. Whom else did Isaiah, in spirit, call the man of sorrows, knowing infirmity, who, ‘ had neither form nor comeliness? Him,’ says he, ‘ we esteemed stricken, smitten of God, and humbled: but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, and with his stripes we are healed.’

“ What, fellow Christian ! Did Christ not take upon him the shame of sin for our sakes, and shall we be ashamed of being vilified, or reputed black for his sake ? Look attentively on this vilified Saviour, disfigured in dress, and clothed with mock garments, defaced with bloody wounds, defiled with nauseous spittle, mortified with blows, and pale with death. What more deformed, or blackened, could strike the eyes of his beholders, than he, when, with his arms wide extended on the cross, he afforded laughter to his inveterate enemies, tears to the faithful, and agony to convulsed nature, when he alone was a subject of mockery and sport, who alone was worthy to command respect, and able to inflict terror through the whole universe ?

“Meditate, therefore, pious reader, on the sufferings of that most sacred, crucified body, and see if there is anything there, which does not plead for you to the eternal Father. For you it is that that divine head is pierced with innumerable thorns. ‘ My people,’ saith the Lord by his prophet, ‘ have covered me all over with the thorns of their sins.’ Lest your head should ache, lest your intentions should be wounded, his eyes were closed by death, and the luminaries of the world were at that instant extinct. At the darkening of his sacred eyes, those great lights were eclipsed with the rest, and universal darkness overshadowed the whole earth. And why all this, but

that your eyes might be averted from be holding vanity, or being attracted by it.

“Those blessed ears which perpetually hear in Heaven, the exulting exclamation of * Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabbaoth ; ‘heard upon earth, thou hast a devil : crucify him, crucify him.’ And all this, that your ears might no longer be deaf to the voice of God, or to the cries of the poor : but deaf to detraction, deaf to discourses injurious to God, or detrimental to your brother, and deaf to every vain and unprofitable sound.

“ That divinely beauteous face, the most comely of all amongst the sons of men, was defiled with spittle, disfigured with bruises, profaned with dirt, and exhibited to scorn, that your face might be made fair and shining ; and being confirmed in goodness, might not turn to opposite extremes.

“That blessed mouth which directed angels, and instructed men in heavenly knowledge, which only spoke, and all things were done according to his will, was drenched with vinegar and gall ; and why ? But that your mouth and heart might thenceforth be enabled to relish the sweets of truth, and confess your God.

‘ ‘ Those heavenly hands, which moulded the heavens and the earth, were barbarously stretched with nails on the cross. Why did your guiltless Saviour submit to this, but to purchase for you the grace of keeping your hands ever open for the relief of the needy and distressed ; and to qualify you to say with the Psalmist : * My soul is always in my hands. What we carry in our hands we cannot easily forget, and thus he, who has his soul forever in his hands by his indefatigable industry in good works, cannot be unmindful of it.

“Those sacred feet whose very footstool we ought to adore, because it is holy, were inhumanly transfixed with nails, that your feet might not hurry you to evil, but run on in the way of the commandments of your God. ‘ They have pierced my feet,’ says the prophet in the person of Christ, ‘ they have numbered all my bones.’ For you he sacrificed his flesh and his life, to purchase your body and soul ; and thus he ransomed all you are, with all he is himself.

“Rouse up then, my soul, and shaking off your dust, contemplate this memorable, this incomparable man, this Man-God, whom you see before you in the transparent crystal of the holy Gospel. Consider, my soul, who this is, who proceeds with the majestic Air of a monarch, though covered

with the ignominy of a despicable slave ! He moves with a crown on his head, but his diadem is an instrument of torments, and his sacred temples are transfixed with innumerable wounds from it. He is decked in royal robes, but they are to him badges of scorn instead of honor. He waves a sceptre in his hand, not to command others, but to be struck with it himself. He is adored with bended knees, proclaimed a king, and receives the homage of a numerous multitude, but they are marks of contempt and derision instead of duty and fidelity. His lovely countenances spit upon, his beauteous cheeks are buffeted, and his honorable neck bends under dishonor.

“Behold, my soul, how this sacred man of sorrows is abused and reviled. He is commanded, all faint and sinking beneath his stripes, to bend his sacred shoulders under the heavy load of the cross, and to bear his ignominy to the place of execution. He is raised on the cross, he is insulted and scoffed at there, and permitted no other comfort than a draught of vinegar, mixed with gall. And in return for all this usage, he only says,

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ What a stupendous personage is this, who, amidst all his torments and ill-usage, never once opened his mouth to complain of, accuse, threaten, or curse the vile brutes, who are busied in doing him such cruel injustice! But, after all their ill-treatment of him, he breaks forth into such terms of blessing as have no example. What instances of meekness, patience and goodness, can we produce like this ?

“But look, my soul, yet a little nearer, and see how worthy he is of all your admiration and pity. Behold him naked, and torn with stripes, suspended by iron nails, on an ignominious cross, between two thieves, plied with vinegar and gall, persecuted to death, nay, even beyond death, with a lance, which rips open his sacred side. And view him thus pouring forth five rivers of precious blood, from his hands, feet, and sides ! Weep, O my eyes, and]thou, O my soul, melt into tenderness, dissolve into pity for this most lovely of the sons of men, whom thou seest amidst all this meekness, oppressed with every injurious treatment.

“O look down, Lord, eternal Father! look down from your sanctuary above, and behold this sacred offering which our high priest, your holy Son Jesus Christ, offers to you for the sins of us, his brethren, and be propitious to the multitude of our iniquities, and greatness of our malice. Behold the

blood of our brother Jesus, crying out to you from the cross, ‘Behold, I am crowned with glory and honor.’ Earnest he stands, soliciting at your right hand for us ; for he is our flesh, and our brother.

“Look, O Lord, on the countenance of Christ thy Son, who is become obedient to thee, even to death, and let not the marks of his wounds be ever from before thy eyes, that thou mayest always remember the satisfaction he has made to thee for our sins. Would, O Lord, that the sins, by which we have deserved thy indignation, were placed in a balance with the sufferings which thy most innocent son Jesus endured for us ! May every tongue return thee thanks O Lord, for thy great goodness, who sparedst not thy only son, but deliveredst him to death for us, to the end we might have so great, so true an advocate with thee in heaven ! And to thee, O blessed Jesus, what acts of thanksgiving, or what tribute, worthy thy acceptance, can I make, who am but dirt and ashes, a vile compound of clay ? For what was there wanting for my salvation, which thou hadst not done ? From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, thou wast wholly plunged in the waters of suffering and affliction, to draw me out of the same. The waters have entered even to thy blessed soul. Thy soul was separated by death, that thou mightest restore me mine, which I had lost. Wherefore, thou hast bound me to thee by a double debt, that is, by what thou hast bestowed upon me, and by what thou has lost for my sake. I am indebted to thee for my life, which twice thou hast given me ; once in my creation, and once in my redemption. Wherefore, I have nothing to offer thee, which more justly is thy due, than my life itself. I cannot find what recompense man can make thee, O Christ, for thy precious soul, which was so much troubled and burdened with affliction. For were the heavens, the earth, and all the beauties belonging to them, in my power, they would all fall short of the greatness of the debt I owe to thee. It is thy gift, O Lord, that I even make thee any part of that return which I owe thee. I ought to love thee with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, and with all my strength ; and to follow thy example, who vouchsafedst to die for me. And how shall I be able to do this but by thy help ? My soul shall follow close after thee, because her whole strength depends on thee !”

Thus far St. Bernard. But let us now proceed to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

CHAPTER LXXII

THE GLOEIOUS RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS, AND HIS APPEARANCE FIRST TO HIS BLESSED MOTHER

“EARLY on the Sunday morning, before the break of day, the soul of our blessed Jesus, accompanied by a glorious tribe of blessed spirits, returned again to the sepulchre where his body lay ; and resuming the same, he arose by virtue of his sacred divinity, and miraculously went out of the grave without opening it. About the same time, Mary Magdalen, Mary of James, and Mary of Salome, taking leave of our blessed Lady, set out towards the sepulchre of our Lord ; taking with them many precious ointments, which they had prepared for that purpose. The Blessed Virgin in the meantime remained at home, fixed in devout prayer ; which we may piously imagine she made in the following manner : “Most merciful Father, full of clemency and pity, you know that my most beloved and blessed son is now dead and buried, and that he was first cruelly fixed to a disgraceful cross between two thieves ; and that after he had resigned his blessed soul to you, I myself helped to place in the sepulchre his sacred body, which I conceived without blemish, and bore without pain. You know, O Lord, he was all the good I possessed, all I could desire, and the only comfort and life of my soul. But at length he was suddenly snatched from me, being full of sorrow, full of wounds, rent and scourged, and by his cruel enemies shamefully abused and condemned to death ; so that he was forsaken by his disciples, who fled from him ; and I, his disconsolate and afflicted mother, could no ways help him. But now, O Father of mercy, though at that time it pleased you not to

deliver him from that cruel and bitter passion, yet, as your holy will is now fully accomplished, and it is in your power to restore him again safely to me, I beseech your divine majesty to do it. Why does he tarry so long ? Send him to me speedily, O most bountiful Father, for my soul can have no peace till I behold him. O my most sweet son Jesus, where art thou now? What art thou doing ? And why dost thou stay so long before thou comest to relieve me ? Delay no longer I beseech thee, but come ; for thou thyself said, that thou wouldst arise on the third day ; and is that day now come ? Rise therefore, my beloved, my joy, and comfort me with thy presence, whom thou hast so much afflicted with thy absence.”

As our Lady was thus praying, bathed in a flood of tears which flowed from her lovely eyes, our blessed Lord suddenly appeared, and stood before her robed in white, and with a pleasing and lovely aspect comforted her, saying, “Hail, holy parent.” She, surprised with sudden joy, said, “Art thou my blessed son, Jesus?” and bowing down, she adored him. And he again said to her, “It is I, my beloved mother. I am risen from death, and am now present with you. My sorrows have ceased. I have triumphed over death, and have overcome all my pain and anguish, so that they can never more have any power over me.” To whom she answered, “* Blessed be thy omnipotent and eternal Father, who has comforted me again with thy presence : may his holy name be exalted, magnified, and praised forever.” Thus lovingly conversing together, our Lord Jesus related to her the things he had wrought in those three days, after his passion, and how he delivered the fathers from the prison in which they were confined. Wherefore, this is a sovereign Pasch, this the joyful day of which the royal prophet spoke, saying, “This is the day which the Lord hath made ; let us rejoice and be glad therein.”

CHAPTER LXXIII

THE COMING OF THE THREE MARYS TO THE MONUMENT, AND THE RACE BETWEEN PETER AND JOHN

MAGDALEN, as we have said before, in company with the two Marys, went to the monument with the ointments. When they came to the entrance of the sepulchre, they were concerned as to how they should get in ; who will roll away the stone for us from the monument, say they ? But no sooner had they said it, than looking up they saw the stone removed, and an angel sitting upon it, who said to them, “Be not afraid.” They, however, disappointed of their hopes, by not finding the body of our Lord, gave little attention to the angel ; but running back affrighted, told the disciples that our Lord’s body was taken away. Upon which, Peter and John immediately arose, and ran to the monument with zeal and anxiety, and the Marys after them. When they came thither, they found not the body, but only the winding sheet, and other linen it was wrapped in Wherefore they returned immediately with their eyes bathed in tears, and their hearts rent with affliction. They sought their Lord, but could not find him, nor knew they now where or which way to seek him. Compassionate them then, pious reader, in so great an affliction.

CHAPTER LXXIV

OUR LORD 'S APPEARANCE TO THE HOLY WOMEN

THE Marys, however, remained there, and looking towards the monument, saw two angels standing clothed in white, who said to them, “ Whom do you seek? Do you seek one living among the dead?” But they gave no attention to the angels, nor received any comfort from this vision. For they came not to seek angels, but the Lord of angels. Two of the Marys, therefore, lost and absorbed in affliction, withdrew to a little distance from the monument, and sat down to soothe their grief. While Magdalen, at a loss what to do, and unable to live without her divine Master, sat sadly pensive and weeping at the mouth of the sepulchre ; where again she saw the same angels, who again asked her, “ Woman, why do you weep ? Whom do you seek ?” “They have taken away my Lord,” said she, ‘ and I know not where they have laid him.” O wonderful operation of love ! One angel had told her he was risen : and two others had assured her he was alive ; and yet so forgetful is she as to say, I know not. Love, divine love, was the cause of this self oblivion in Magdalen, for as Origen says on this passage, her soul was not with her, but with her divine master Hence she knew not that is, she knew neither how to hear, remember, nor think without him. Wherefore, while thus she continued weeping, disconsolate, and regardless of all the angel said to her, her divine master, overcome as it were by her excess of love, appeared to her to console her, and said, “Woman, whom seek you? Why do you weep?” At first she knew him not, but inebriated with affection, answered him, “Lord, if you have taken my Lord away, tell me where you have put him.” Think then you see this glorious woman with her face bathed in a flood of tears, beseeching, and with every moving

remonstrance earnestly conjuring him to tell her where she may find the beloved object she was in search, of : for still she hoped to hear some glad tidings of him. How grateful a sight was this to Christ ! He therefore again said to her, “ Mary” When immediately coming as it were to herself, and knowing him by his voice, she cried out in a transport of unutterable joy, “ Rabbi ?” that is, master ! “ Ah, you are the sweet, the adorable Lord I was seeking with so much eagerness. ‘ ‘ Then rising, she ran to embrace his feet. But our Lord, to raise her mind to a more celestial affection, and wean her from his earthly presence, said to her, “Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father : but tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father, and yours.” After they had awhile conversed in a celestial manner with each other, our Lord gave her his blessing, and departed : when she, full of joy and spiritual comfort, went to her companions, and told them the gladsome news. They were exceedingly overjoyed at the tidings of our Lord’s resurrection : but when they found they were not blessed with a sight of him, they departed homewards with grief and dejection. But as the above-mentioned three Marys were proceeding on their way, before they came to the the benign Jesus vouchsafed to appear to them, saying, “ Hail ! “ No sooner did they hear and see him, than seized with a joy beyond the power of words to express, they fell on their faces and adored him Here again our Lord vouchsafed to enter into a gracious and ineffable conversation with them for some time, concerning his sublime mysteries. After which he said to them bid my brethren come to me in Galilee, there they will see me as I foretold them. Admire here the great humility of our Lord Jesus, in calling his poor lowly disciples his brethren. This you see is a virtue, which Christ laid not aside even after his resurrection. Meditate then devoutly on those edifying subjects. And, if you be desirous of reaping full advantage from the contemplation of them, endeavor to be as present in spirit, as these holy persons were in body.

CHAPTER LXXV

OUR LORD'S APPEARANCE TO JOSEPH, TO JAMES THE LESS, AND TO PETER

OUR Lord Jesus, after departing from the Marys, appeared to Joseph of Arimathea, who had buried him, and who was now in prison. For the Jews had seized him and confined him in a jail, with an intent to put him to death after the Sabbath. Our Lord therefore appeared to him, and wiping off the tears and damp from his face, led him out, the doors unopened, as ancient pious tradition informs us. He also appeared to James the Less, who had vowed never to taste any food, till he should see our Lord risen from the dead. To him, therefore, and to those who were with him, he commanded that they should spread the table, then taking bread and blessing it, he gave to him, saying, "Eat, my beloved brother, for the Son of Man is risen from the dead."*

When the Marys returned home, and acquainted the disciples with the resurrection of Christ, Peter, extremely afflicted that he had not seen his Lord, and unable, through excess of love, to rest without seeing him. arose immediately and went alone to the sepulchre, not knowing where else so speedily to find him. While he was proceeding on his way, Jesus appeared to him, and said, "Peace be to you, Simon Peter." Then Peter striking his breast, and

* See St. Jerome on Ecclesiastical Writers, tom.

prostrating himself on the ground, in a flood of tears, cried out, "O Lord! O dearest Saviour! I have sinned against thee ; I acknowledge my crime in leaving thee in thy distress, and shamefully denying thee thrice." And when

his love and grief stopped his words, he embraced his masters holy feet, and tenderly kissed them. Our Lord then raised him, and embracing him, said again : “ Peace on thee, Simon Peter : fear not, thy sins are forgiven thee. Thy denial I foresaw and foretold thee, and now I forgive thee. Go and confirm thy brethren in the belief of my resurrection. And be confident thyself, that I have conquered for thee all thy enemies, and even death itself.” Thus awhile they stood solemnizing a glorious Pasch in heavenly conversation. After this Peter returned to our blessed Lady and the disciples, and related to them all he had seen and heard. In the Gospel there is no mention made of our Lord’s appearing to his sacred mother. I have, however, taken notice of it, first because the Church seems to countenance my doing so, as may appear more plainly in the legend on the resurrection.

CHAPTER LXXVI

CHRIST'S RETURN TO THE HOLY FATHERS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

OUR Lord not having yet visited the holy Fathers after his resurrection, as soon as he departed from Peter, took a numerous retinue of angels, and went to visit them. When the venerable tribe saw him coming towards them, they went to meet him with excessive transports of spiritual Joy, singing, "Behold, our king comes : let us meet our Saviour ! Our mighty beginning, and his kingdom shall have no end! This is a blissful day that shines forth to us! Come all, and obey the Lord." Then prostrating themselves, they adored him : and rising, continued singing with reverence, fervor and joy, his praises, saying, "Thou hast risen our glory : we will be glad and rejoice in thee. Thy kingdom is of all ages ; and thy dominion shall last from generation to generation. We depart not from you; and you shall raise us, and we will magnify your holy name. Our leader is come forth ; made a high priest forever. This, this is the day which the Lord hath made ; let us be glad and rejoice thereon. The day of redemption has shone forth to us, of ancient reparation, and of eternal felicity. This day throughout the universe, the heavens distil honey ; because the Lord has reigned from a tree. The Lord has reigned, he is clothed with beauty , the Lord is clothed with strength, and hath girded himself. Sing to him a new song, for he has wrought wonders. His right hand and his holy arm hath saved us to himself. For we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Come let us adore him." When the evening drew nigh, Jesus acquainted them with his design of going again to visit his poor afflicted brethren, who, after his death, were dispersed like sheep having no shepherd, and were seeking him with the utmost anxiety. "I will return therefore," says he, "to them, that I may

console and strengthen them, and will soon come back to release you.”
Then the holy Fathers, prostrating themselves again, adored him, saying,
“Go, Lord Jesus, blessed be thy holy name ; and be all things done
according to thy divine word and will.”

CHAPTER LXXVII

CHRIST APPEARS TO THE TWO DISCIPLES GOING TO EMMAUS

AS two disciples were walking together towards the little town of Emmaus, talking of what had happened in a melancholy manner, and in a kind of despondency about him, our Lord Jesus came up to them, and in the form of a traveller joined in conversation with them ; interrogating, answering, and giving them salutary maxims, as the Gospel relates. At length, suffering himself to be forced, he went in with them, and manifested himself to them. Here, pious reader, contemplate the goodness of Christ. For, first, such is his ardent love for his disciples, that he cannot suffer them long to wander in uncertainty and affliction. Like a faithful friend, a trusty companion, and an affable Lord, he joins with them, enquires the cause of their affliction, and expounds the scriptures to them in such a manner as to cleanse their hearts from all rust of earthly affections, and influence them with divine love. Thus does he daily behave towards us in a spiritual manner. If overcome by any afflictions, perplexities, or languor of soul, we talk of him, he is immediately with us, comforting, enlightening, and inflaming our hearts with his love. Of such excellent advantage is it to us to talk of God in our adversities or tribulation. Hence, says the prophet, “How sweet are thy words to my taste, sweeter to my mouth than honey and the honey-comb.” And again, “My heart waxed hot within me, and fire burns in my meditation.”

Secondly, behold the goodness of our Lord in feigning that he was going farther, in order to increase their desire of his staying with them, and to induce them to invite and detain him. How gracious was it in him to go with them, to break bread, to bless that bread with his sacred hands for them, and

afterwards to reveal himself to them ! Does he not do the same towards us all, as often as we apply to prayer and meditation ? Thus then does it behoove us to pray without ceasing.

CHAPTER LXXVIII

OUR LORD APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES, WHO WERE SHUT UP ON THE DAY OF THE RESURRECTION

THE two disciples immediately returned to Jerusalem, and finding all the other disciples, except Thomas, assembled together, they related what had happened to them, where they likewise heard in their turn, a confirmation of our Lord's being risen, and having appeared to Simon. During this conversation, our Lord Jesus himself came into the room, the doors being shut, and saluted them all, saying, "Peace be with you." * The disciples seeing our Lord, fell on their faces, and acknowledged their fault in having fled at his passion, they received him with great joy. Our Lord then comforted them, saying, "Rise, brethren, your sins are forgiven you." After which he stood familiarly amongst them, and showed the prints of his sacred wounds. Meantime, the table being spread by his order, he sat down, and eat part of a fish and some honey which was set before him. Then he breathed upon them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." O how full of joy and spiritual delight was this interview !

Imagine, too, you see here our blessed Lady ; for it was to her that the disciples flocked when they assembled together after the death of our Lord. O with what inexpressible joy is she not filled at the sight of her glorious and triumphant son in the midst of his disciples, and how studious, how pleased, and how devoutly transported is she in doing little offices of reverence and love towards him ! And how willing is our Lord to add to her delight by accepting little services from her, and making her returns of honor and affection before his disciples. Forget not, likewise, to cast an eye

of devotion towards Mary Magdalen, that favorite among the disciples, that kind of female apostle among the apostles. Fancy you see her as usual, sitting at the feet of her divine master, absorbed in attention to his divine words, and transported with joy whenever she has an opportunity of ministering to him. O how heavenly must this mansion be, and what a blessing to be in it at this delicious moment ! this was a true Pasch ! Who must not rejoice to be present at it ? And what delight must you not experience in contemplating it ? But perhaps you are present at it, without being affected by it. Though if you were truly attentive to the passion, and contemplated it with a sincere feeling of the sufferings of Christ, of his mother, and of his disciples, you cannot but now partake in the joys of their Pasch. The same joys you might renew on every Sunday, if you were careful likewise to renew on the preceding Friday and Saturday, the devout memorial of his passion. For, as St. Paul says, “If you are partakers of his passion, so shall you be of his comforts.”

CHAPTER LXXIX

OUR LORD APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES ON THE OCTAVE OF EASTER. WHEN ST. THOMAS WAS WITH THEM.

AGAIN on the eighth day after his resurrection our Lord Jesus appeared to his disciples, the doors being shut. And now Thomas, who the time before was not of their company, was present with them. To whom, when they gave him an account of Christ's having vouchsafed them a visit, he answered, " Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger in his side, I will not believe." Christ then, the Good Shepherd, solicitous for his little flock, in compassion to the frailty of this his beloved disciple, stands before them all, and graciously salutes them, saying, " Peace be with you." Then addressing himself to Thomas, he said, " Reach hither your finger and behold my hands ; stretch forth your hand and put it to my side, and be not incredulous, but faithful. ' ' Then Thomas, after having touched the wounds of Jesus, falling on his face, said, " My Lord and my God." Thus making reparation for his former unbelief. For now, though he saw but the humanity of our Lord, he confessed his divinity. After this he joined with his fellow-disciples in acknowledging the fault of forsaking so divine a master at the time of his passion. But our Lord Jesus graciously raised him up, bid him be cheerful, and mercifully forgave him all former faults. It was doubtless by special dispensation of heaven that Thomas was permitted to hesitate in faith, that Christ's resurrection might more evidently appear. How glorious does the bounty and condescension of this sweet Saviour shine forth in his conduct towards his weak disciples,

and particularly to Thomas, in showing to them his sacred wounds, to remove from their souls every cloud of doubt for their and our advantage 1
Three great ends he proposed to himself in preserving the prints of his sacred wounds ; that by them he might confirm his apostles and make them firm in the faith of his resurrection : that while he was acting the office of our mediator with his divine Father, he might the more easily appease him, by showing them to his eternal majesty ; and finally, that he might in the day of judgment clear himself to the reprobate, by reminding them of what he had suffered to redeem them, if they would have been redeemed. Our Lord Jesus remains thus awhile with his blessed mother and the beloved disciples, talking with them of the kingdom of God, while they stand listening to his ineffable doctrines, and dwelling on his divine countenance, in raptures of admiration, joy, and love. Observe them standing round him, but our blessed Lady close by his side, and Magdalen in her usual place, at his sacred feet. Do you too stand there reverently, yet at a distance, and perchance your humility, compunction, and devotion may move his mercy to call you nearer to him. At length, however, our divine Saviour left them ; telling them that he should thence repair to Galilee, where again they might see him ; and departing he gave them his blessing. They remained then awhile together, still hungering and thirsting after him ; not satiated with his presence, though greatly comforted.

CHAPTER LXXX

OUR LORD JESUS APPEARS TO HIS DISCIPLES IN GALILEE

THE disciples were no sooner repaired to Galilee, as our Lord had appointed them, than he appeared to them, saying, “All power is given to me in heaven and earth : Go ye therefore and teach all nations: BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST : teaching them to believe all those things I have commanded you : and behold I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” Matt, xxviii. After this they all humbly adored him, and remained with him for some time with great joy and satisfaction. Consider them well, and contemplate the above mentioned words he spoke to them : for they are full of mystery and heavenly consolation. For, first, he showed them that he is Lord of all things. Secondly, he gave them authority and a command to preach. Thirdly, he taught them the form of baptism. And finally he encouraged and comforted them, by promising always to be with them to the end of the world. Consider then the sweet and singular joy they receive, and the many great and wonderful tokens of love he shows them ; which being done, he farther gave them his blessing, and disappeared.

CHAPTER LXXXI

HE APPEARS TO THEM AGAIN NEAR THE SEA OF TIBERIAS

WHILE the disciples remained in Galilee, on a certain time, seven of them went out to fish in the sea of Tiberias, and having labored the whole night, they caught nothing. Here at the break of day, our Lord appeared again to them, standing on the sea shore, and asking them if they had taken any fish, they answered him, no. Wherefore he said, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you shall find some.” They did as he ordered them, and they were not able to draw the net out for the multitude of fish. Then John said to Peter, “It is our Lord.” Peter, when he heard it was their Lord, put on his coat, for he was then naked, and cast himself into the sea to come to him ; but the other disciples came in the boat. When they come to land, they saw hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread, which the Lord had prepared for them. He bid them likewise bring some of the fish they had taken, and dress them ; and he eat with them on the sea side. And according to his accustomed humility, he ministered to them, he broke the bread and gave it them, and gave them likewise of the fish. The seven disciples, with great alacrity of spirit, conversed with their Lord, and with all submission and respect eat with him, admiring, with hearts full of joy, the affability of his pleasing countenance. They received from his sacred hands the food he gave them, and with no less abundance and spiritual comfort, replenished their souls, as well as their bodies. O what a divine and celestial banquet! Consider well every particular, and endeavor to feed thy soul with them.

When the refection was over our Lord addressing himself to Peter, said, “Lovest thou me more than these ? ‘ To whom Peter replied, * ‘ Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.” Wherefore Christ said to him “Feed my lambs.”

Our Lord repeated the same question three times, and at every time recommended to him his flock. Whence we may see the singular bounty and care of our Lord Jesus, and especially his exceeding charity and love for our souls, by his repeated recommendations of them to Peter's care. After this he foretells Peter the death he should suffer for his sake, saying, "When thou was younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk whither thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wilt not." And this he said to signify that by death of the cross he should glorify God. After this Peter desired to know of our Lord, in what manner John should suffer : and our Lord answered him, saying, "So I will have him to remain till I come; what is it to thee?" As if he had said, I will not that he follow me by the way of sufferings and passion, as thou shalt ; but that he live to a full and complete age, and end his days in peace. Some of the disciples understood by that saying, that he was never to die.

After these things our Lord disappeared, and returned again according to his usual custom, to the holy Fathers. The disciples remained greatly comforted, and returned soon after to Jerusalem.

CHAPTER LXXXII

OUR LORD JESUS APPEARS TO MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED DISCIPLES TOGETHER ! —SOMETHING RELATING TO HIS APPARITIONS IN GENERAL

SAINT PAUL mentions that our Lord Jesus, at another time, appeared to above five hundred disciples gathered together : but where, at what time, or in what manner, is uncertain, it not being recorded in scripture. Yet we may well suppose that it was with the usual meekness, bounty, and charity on his side, and with no less joy and comfort on that of the disciples. And hitherto we have spoken of our Lord's appearing twelve different times after his resurrection ; having omitted two other apparitions which follow, when we shall treat of his ascension. But there is mention made only of ten in the gospel. For it is not written in any place that he ever appeared to his holy mother ; so that it is only piously believed he did. How he appeared to Joseph of Arimathea, is written in the apochryphal gospel of Nicodemus. And his appearing to James, St. Paul mentions in his Epistle to the Corinthians, as he does likewise that to the five hundred brethren.

We may, however, devoutly suppose, that he appeared several other times ; for it is very probable that our most bountiful Lord often visited his holy mother, his beloved disciples, and St. Mary Magdalen, comforting those in a more especial manner who had suffered and been most afflicted at his bitter death and passion. And this seems to be the opinion of St. Augustine, when, speaking of the time of the resurrection, he says, “All things relating

to our Lord's appearance after his resurrection are not written ! For he conversed with them." And it is not improbable that the holy Fathers, and chiefly Abraham and David (to whom the Lord made a special promise of the incarnation of his son) came in company with him, to see the most excellent virgin, their daughter, and God's most blessed mother, who for them and for all others had found so much grace, and bore the Saviour of the world. O with what joy and comfort did they behold her ! With what reverence did they bow to her ; and with what alacrity did they praise and honor her.

And here we may consider the great benignity and charity, and the profound meekness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in this, that after his resurrection, and the glorious victory he had gained for us, he would not leave us, and ascend at once into his glory, but, as a pilgrim yet on earth, would remain forty days, and be conversant among us, to confirm and strengthen his apostles in their faith. This he might have done by his angels, but such was his unspeakable charity, that he would do it himself, by personally conversing with us for the space of forty days, appearing to his apostles, and preaching to them of the kingdom of heaven. All this hath our most merciful Lord done for us, and yet we reflect little on it. He hath always loved us, and still loves us ; but yet such is our ingratitude, that we return him not our love for his ; which is a mark of great unthankfulness in us towards him, notwithstanding the unbounded charity he still has for us.

CHAPTER LXXXIII

THE GLORIOUS ASCENSION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

TOUCHING the wonderful ascension of our Lord Jesus, it behooves thee, pious reader, to awaken thy heart, and to render thyself more than ordinarily attentive to all that is here said or done, relating to this subject, if thou desirest to feed thy soul with heavenly comfort, and reap the spiritual unction, which plentifully flows from the devout contemplation of so divine a subject.

On the fortieth day after his resurrection our Lord Jesus, knowing that his time was now come to depart from this world, and to pass hence to his Father, taking with him the holy patriarchs, prophets, and others, who after his resurrection were in the terrestrial paradise, and blessing Enoch and Elias, who remained there still alive, he came to his apostles, who were gathered together on Mount Sion, which was the place where he made his last supper the night before his passion. There were likewise with the apostles at this place, the Blessed Virgin, and many other disciples ; and our Lord appearing to them said, that he would eat with them before he departed from them, as a special token and memorial of the love he bore them. And as they were all eating, being full of joy and spiritual comfort at this last refection of our Lord Jesus, he said to them, “The time is now come in which I must return again to him that sent me ; but you shall remain in the city till you are clothed with the virtue descending from above ; for within a few days you shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, as I before promised you. After which you shall be dispersed throughout the whole world, to preach my gospel, baptizing all that shall believe in me, so that you shall be my witnesses to the utmost confines of

the earth.” He likewise reproved them for their incredulity in not believing those who had seen him rise, that is the angels. This he chose to do at the time he was speaking to them of preaching his gospel, to give them to understand, that they ought to have believed the angels, even before they saw him, much sooner than they ought to be believed by those to whom they were to preach, who, nevertheless, would believe them, though they should not see him. This he did, that by knowing their fault they might remain humble ; showing them at his departure how much he admired that virtue, and that he commended it to them in a singular manner. They asked him concerning many things that were to come to pass ; but he would not inform them, inasmuch as it was not necessary for them to know the secrets of God, which his Father had reserved in his own power, to fulfil at his own will and pleasure. And thus they continued discoursing and eating together, with great comfort and satisfaction, occasioned by the presence of their Lord ; yet their comfort was mixed with some grief, by reason of his departure from them. For they loved him so tenderly, that they could not hear him speak of leaving them without heaviness and sorrow.

And what can we think of his blessed mother? May we not devoutly imagine that, sitting near him, and hearing what he said concerning his departure, she was moved with the tenderness of her motherly affection ; and that overcome with grief, which suddenly seized, and oppressed her blessed soul, she inclined her head towards him, and rested it upon his sacred breast ? For, if St. John the Evangelist, at the last supper, took this freedom, with much more reason may we suppose her to do the same on this doleful occasion. Hence, then, with tears, and many sighs she spoke to him in this manner : “Oh, my beloved son, I beseech thee not to leave me ; but if thou must depart, and return again to thy heavenly Father, take me, thy afflicted mother, along with thee!” But our blessed Lord endeavored to comfort her, and said, “ Grieve not, oh, beloved parent, at my leaving you, because I go to my Father ; and it is expedient that you remain here a short time longer, to confirm in their faith, such as shall be converted, and believe in me, and afterwards I will come again, and take you with me, to be a partaker of my glory.” To whom again our Lady replied, “My beloved son, may thy will always be fulfilled in all things, for I am not only contented to remain here during thy pleasure, but to suffer death for love of those souls, for which thou hast so willingly vouchsafed to lay down thy life : this,

however, I beseech thee, be thou ever mindful of me.” Our Lord then again comforted her, with the disciples and Mary Magdalen, saying, “Let not your hearts be troubled, nor fear ye anything ; I will not leave you desolate ; I go, but will shortly return again to you, and will remain always with you.” At length he bid them remove from thence, and go to Mount Olivet, because from that place he would ascend into heaven, in the presence of them all : saying this, he disappeared.

His holy mother, with the rest of the company, hastened to the said mount, about a mile distant from Jerusalem, as he had appointed, where our Lord again soon appeared to them. Behold on this day we have two different apparitions of our Lord. Thus being all together, our Lord embraced his holy mother, and she again embraced him in a most tender manner, taking leave of each other. And the disciples, Mary Magdalen, and the rest falling down to the ground, and weeping with tenderness, kissed his blessed feet, and he, raising them up, embraced all his apostles most lovingly.

Let us now, pious reader, diligently consider them, and devoutly contemplate all that is here done : and amongst the rest, let us behold the holy Fathers, who being there present, though invisible, joyfully admire, and inwardly praise the blessed virgin, by whom they received so great a benefit as their salvation. They behold, with pleasing admiration, the glorious champions, and leaders of God’s hosts, the apostles, whom our Lord Jesus had chosen from among all others, to conquer and subdue the world, and bring it over to the belief of his holy doctrine.

At length, when the mysteries were all fulfilled and completed, our Lord Jesus began gradually to raise himself up before them, and to ascend by his own virtue and power into heaven. And then the Blessed Virgin, with the rest, fell down and devoutly worshipped him. And our Lady said, “O my beloved, I beseech thee to be mindful of me,” and with this she burst forth into tears, not being able to refrain, when she reflected on his departure, yet was she full of inward joy, to see her blessed son thus gloriously ascend into heaven. His disciples also, when they beheld him ascending, said, “Thou knowest, O Lord, that we have renounced all things for thee, wherefore, we beseech thee not to forget us, but be ever mindful of us, for whom we have forsaken all.” Then our Lord lifting up his hands, with serene and pleasing aspect, crowned with glory, victoriously ascended into heaven, but first

blessing them, he said, “Be steadfast, and fight courageously, for I shall always be with you, even to the end of the world.”

Thus, our Lord Jesus, all glorious and resplendently shining, ascended into heaven, triumphantly leading with him the noble tribe of holy Fathers, and fulfilling that which the prophet Micah had said long before his ascension: “And their king shall pass before them, and the Lord at the head of them.” So that they all followed him with unspeakable joy, singing canticles of praises and thanksgiving to him, for their deliverance from all sorrow, and their entrance into all joy, and never ending felicity.

And Michael, the prince of God’s celestial host, going before, carried the joyful tidings of their Lord’s ascending, at which the whole heavenly court of celestial spirits came forth to meet their Lord, and with all worship and reverence, they led him with hymns and songs of jubilation, repeating with inexpressible joy, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Having paid their due reverence to the Lord, and ended the joyful canticles, which related to his glorious ascension, the angels and the holy Fathers began to rejoice together. And what tongue can express, or mind conceive, that which passed between them at this happy, happy meeting? The blessed spirits first began to congratulate them on their arrival, saying in this manner: “Ye princes of God’s people, ye are welcome to our eternal habitation, and we rejoice and are glad at your arrival : ye all are gathered together, and wonderfully exalted with our God ; Alleluia. Therefore rejoice, and sing to him who so gloriously ascendeth to heaven, and above the heaven of heavens : Alleluia.”

To which the holy Fathers again joyfully replied, “To you, princes of God’s people, Alleluia: Our guardians and helpers, Alleluia : Joy and peace forever, Alleluia : Let us sing and make mirth to our king and our Saviour, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Now we joyfully enter into the house of our Lord, Alleluia : to remain forever in the glorious city of God, Alleluia. As sheep of our Lord’s pasture we enter his gates, Alleluia : With hymns and canticles, Alleluia : For the Lord of power is with us. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.” For according to the prophet, “The Lord is ascended in shouts of joy, and the Lord in the sound of a trumpet.”

Our Lord Jesus ascended visibly for the greater comfort of his mother and disciples, that they might see him as far as they could. And behold ‘ ‘ A cloud received him out of their sight, and in an instant they were present in

heaven !” And as the Blessed Virgin and the disciples were still looking up, two angels stood beside them in white garments, who began to comfort them, telling them not to look longer after his body, which they saw ascend so gloriously into heaven, for that they should not see him any more in that form till the Day of Judgment, when he should come to judge the quick and the dead. They bid them return into the city again, and there to expect the coming of the Holy Ghost, as he himself had told them. Our blessed Lady spoke to the angels, desiring them to recommend her to her blessed son ; who profoundly inclining to her, promised gladly to fulfil her commands. And the apostles and Mary Magdalen recommended themselves in the same manner. After this, the angels departing, they went according as they had been appointed in to the city, unto Mount Sion, and waited there the coming of the Holy Ghost.

Our Lord Jesus, in company with that blessed tribe of holy souls, opened the gates of Heaven, which for a long time had been shut to mankind, and as a victorious conqueror, triumphantly entered in, and joyfully saluting his father, said, “ O holy Father, I return thee thanks for the glorious victory thou hast given me over all our enemies: behold, O eternal Father, I here present to thee our friends, who till this time have been detained in banishment and in prison ! And as I have promised to my disciples and brethren, whom I have left in the world, to send them the Holy Ghost, the comforter, I beseech thee to fulfil my promise, for to thy care and protection I recommend them.” The Father raising him up, placed him on his right-hand, and said, “My blessed son, to thee all power is given in heaven and earth, wherefore concerning all thou hast asked, dispose and order as shall seem most expedient to thee.”

After this the angelical spirits and holy Fathers, who remained all the time prostrate before the throne of the most adorable Trinity, arose, and with all reverence, resumed their Alleluias and spiritual canticles, and sung joyfully to the Lord.

For if Moses and the children of Israel, after they had crossed the Red Sea, sung a song to the Lord, saying, “ Let us sing to the Lord,” etc., and Mary the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, and other women going out after her, sung to the Lord with timbrels, and with dances, with how much more reason should they do it now, after the victory obtained over all their enemies ? And when David brought the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem, the

whole multitude of the children of Israel sung to the Lord, and David played before him, on all manner of instruments, on harps, on timbrels, on cornets, on cymbals, “and David danced before the Lord with all his might.” 2 Kings, 6. With how much more reason did they now do it, when present with their Lord, in the perfect enjoyment of so great happiness ? And if St. John the Evangelist, as we read in the Apocalypse, heard a voice from heaven of a hundred and forty-four thousand playing on their harps, and singing a new song before the throne of God and the Lamb, whatever that might represent, I cannot but piously imagine, that it was on this day, more than on any other, fulfilled. They all sing, they all rejoice, and exult with the utmost jubilation, and with shouts of mirth they praise and glorify the Lord, so that the whole heavenly Jerusalem echoes with joyful Alleluias, and canticles of mirth were heard throughout every part

Never from the beginning of time was there known so solemn a festivity, nor shall ever be again, till after the last and general day of judgment, when all the elect shall meet together in their beautiful and glorious bodies.

And therefore this solemn feast of the ascension, if every circumstance be duly considered, is the greatest of all solemnities, which we shall find to be true, if we briefly consider the rest. The incarnation of God is a great feast, a day of solemn jubilation to us, but not to him, since he was then confined within the narrow compass of the small enclosure of a virginal womb. His nativity was likewise a great feast, and a day of public rejoicing to us. But he was to be pitied, who was born to such great poverty, suffering and penury. His death and suffering was a great feast to us, because our sins were then all blotted out ; but as he suffered most cruel torments, and a most vile death, it was not to him, nor ought it be to us, a subject of joy. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus was a most solemn festivity, both to him and to us, because he appeared as a triumphant conqueror over death, and we remained justified, and in the opinion of St. Augustine, was a more holy feast than the rest, which may be understood of those which preceded it. For the day of the ascension seems still to be more holy and greater than that, for though our Lord rose then from the dead, yet he still remained on earth, the gates of heaven were not yet open, nor were the holy Fathers then presented to his Father, which was fulfilled on the day of his ascension. And if we consider, whatever God wrought before this, he wrought to this end, without which his work would have been imperfect. For heaven and

earth, with all things in them, were made for man ; and man was made only for God, and to enjoy him in his glory : to which glory, no one, though ever so just, could ever attain after sin, till this day. Whence you may, in some measure, comprehend how great and wonderful is this day, which may properly be called the solemn and joyful festivity of our Lord Jesus. For on this day was he first seated in glory, in the humanity he had assumed, at the right hand of his Father, and enjoyed a perfect rest from all his labors.

This day is also a feast of great joy and glory to the blessed spirits of heaven ; for on this day they received a new satisfaction, in the sight of their Lord, whom before they had not seen, under the veil of his sacred humanity. And on this day was begun to be repaired the ruins of their heavenly company, occasioned by the fall of their reprobate brethren, some of whose vacancies were filled up by a glorious number of blessed souls, of patriarchs, prophets, and others, who on this day triumphantly entered the heavenly Jerusalem, and took possession of it as their own right and inheritance. Wherefore, as we solemnly celebrate the feast of one saint or martyr who departed this life, and entered the glory of heaven, how much more ought we to do the same for so many thousands, who entered together in company with the Holy of Holies, who is far more worthy all praise, honor and glory, than all the saints and angels together.

This day is likewise a feast of special joy to the Blessed Virgin, inasmuch as she beheld her blessed son Jesus, perfect God and perfect man, crowned with glory and triumph, ascend victoriously to heaven.

It is also a feast of joy to us, for on this day was our nature first exalted above the highest heavens ; and had he not ascended we could not have received the greatest of all gifts, the Holy Ghost, whom he had promised to send us, wherefore he said to his disciples, “ It is expedient for you that I go, for if I go not, the Paraclete shall not come to you.”

St. Bernard saith, in his sermon on this day, that “The glorious feast of the ascension is the end and accomplishment of all other feasts and solemnities, and a blessed conclusion of the weary pilgrimage of Jesus Christ on earth.”

Hence then may you gather, pious reader, that this feast is greater and more solemn than all others, and that soul, which earnestly and truly loves our Lord Jesus, should on this day lift up his mind more fervently towards heaven, and endeavor to receive a greater plenitude of spiritual comfort and

joy than all other festivals of the year. For our Lord said to his disciples: "Truly, if you loved me, you would rejoice and be glad, because I go to the Father." Whence it appears from his own words, that there was no day in heaven more joyful than this, which lasted till the following day of Pentecost, and we may devoutly imagine it to have been kept and solemnized in the following manner. The ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus was about the sixth hour. And although the whole court of heaven made a general rejoicing in a manner beyond all expression, yet from the hour of his ascension to the sixth hour of the next day, we may piously imagine that the angels more particularly celebrated this joyful festival. And, in the same manner, on the second, the archangels ; on the third day, the virtues ; on the fourth day, the powers ; on the fifth, the principalities ; on the sixth, the dominations ; on the seventh, the thrones ; on the eighth, the cherubims ; on the ninth, the seraphims ; which are the nine orders of holy angels, who continued their joyful solemnity till the vigil of Pentecost ; from which time, to the third hour of the day following, which is Whitsunday, the holy Fathers, with the rest of their blessed company, made the same solemn rejoicings. Thus, during the space of ten days before the descent of the Holy Ghost upon earth, they all continued in an uninterrupted acclamation of praise, glory, and thanksgiving to God, to whom be continued the same by every creature to the end of the world, and forever. Amen.

CHAPTER LXXXIV

THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST

OUR Lord Jesus being ascended into heaven, his blessed mother, with the disciples, returned to Jerusalem, as the angels had told them, and with great joy and comfort, remained there during the space of ten days in fervent prayer, expecting the coming of the Holy Ghost.

When the tenth day was come after the ascension, our Lord Jesus said to his Father: “My beloved Father, the time of grace is near at hand, be mindful, I beseech thee, of the promise I made to my brethren, concerning the Holy Ghost/” To whom the Father said, “My beloved Son, the promise you have made is most grateful in my sight, and I am well pleased it should be performed ; and as the time is now come to fulfil it, let the Holy Ghost Descend to replenish, and fill them with his grace, to comfort and strengthen them, to instruct and teach them, and bestow on them abundance of all heavenly virtues.”

The Holy Ghost descended, then, on Whitsunday, in the form of fiery tongues, upon a hundred and twenty disciples, who at that time were gathered together, and filled them with all grace and virtue : by which they were so greatly strengthened and inflamed, that they immediately went forth, and began to preach the gospel throughout the whole world, and in a great measure made it subject to their doctrine.

This day is then the feast of love, for, as St. Gregory saith, it is the feast of him, who is love itself. For which reason, he who truly desires to serve God, should endeavor, in this holy solemnity, to be inflamed with love, or at least to be enkindled with a vehement desire of being so free from any mixture of the love of this world. For, as St. Bernard assures us, “He is greatly mistaken who thinks to unite heaven with earth, the sweet balm of

spiritual comfort, with the enjoyments of worldly vanities, or the bountiful gifts of the Holy Ghost, with the deceitful flatteries of the flesh.”

Let us, therefore, devout reader, wholly forsake the fleeting vanities of this world, and purify our hearts from all earthly and vain love to creatures, and lead a life of devotion and prayer, as the apostles did, expecting the coming of the Holy Ghost. Thus may we hope to be visited by him, as the apostles were, and to receive all spiritual comfort and grace for our souls.

That we may therefore be able to receive the singular gifts of this divine spirit, and to attain to that bliss to which our Lord is ascended, to prepare the way for us to follow, let us break off all unnecessary engagements with this wretched world, and take no delight in the foul satisfactions of the flesh, nor feed its unlawful desires, but ever earnestly wish, with the apostles, to be separated from it. So that through the grace of the divine Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, we may faithfully endeavor to follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world, and hereafter to ascend with him into the glorious city of the heavenly Jerusalem ; where he, sovereign king, together with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, one God, in perfect Trinity, liveth and reigneth forever, world without end. Amen.

THE END.

RHYTHMICAL PRAYER TO THE
SACRED MEMBERS OF JESUS
HANGING UPON THE CROSS

ASCRIBED TO ST. BERNARD.

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH RHYTHM

BY
EMILY MARY SHAPCOTE
TERTIARY OF ST. DOMINIC.

ST. BERNARD'S RHYTHMICAL PRAYER. TO THE FEET

I

O SAVIOUR of the world, I cry to Thee ;
O Saviour, suffering God, I worship Thee ;
O wounded beauteous Love, I kneel to Thee ;
Thou knowest, Lord, how I would follow Thee,
If of Thyself Thou give Thyself to me.

II

Thy Presence I believe ; O come to me !
Behold me prostrate, Jesus ; look on me !
How beautiful Thou art ! O turn to me !
in Thy tender mercy turn to me,
And let Thy untold pity pardon me !

III

With trembling love and fear I worship Thee ;
I kiss the grievous nails which entered Thee,
And think on those dire wounds which tortured Thee,
And, grieving, lift my weeping eyes to Thee,
Transfixed and dying all for love of me !

IV

O wondrous grace ! O gracious charity !
O love of sinners in such agony !

PARS I. AD PEDES

I

SALVE, mundi salutare,
Salve, salve, Jesu care,
Cruci tuae me aptare
Vellem vere, tu scis quare,
Da mihi tui copiam.

II

Ac si praesens sis accedo,
Imo, te praesentem credo :
O quam mundum hic te cerno,
Ecce tibi me prosterno,
Sis facilis ad veniam.

III

Clavos pedum, plagas duras,
Et tam graves impressuras,
Circumplector cum affectu,
Tuo pavens in aspectu,
Tuorum memor vulnerum.

IV

Grates tan tee caritati,
Nos agamus vulnerati ;
Sweet Father of the poor ! O who can be
Unmoved to witness this great mystery,
The Healer smitten, hanging on a tree .

V

O Gentle Jesus, turn Thee unto me ;
What I have broken do Thou bind in me,
And what is crooked make Thou straight in me ;
What I have lost restore Thou unto me,
And what is weak and sickly heal in me.

VI

O Love ! with all my strength I seek for Thee ;
Upon and in thy Cross I look for Thee ;
With sorrow and with hope I turn to Thee,
That through Thy Blood new health may come to me,
That washed therein Thy love may pardon me.

VII

O take my heart, Thou loved One ; let it be
Transfixed with those dear wounds for love of Thee,
O wound it, Jesus, with pure love of Thee ;
And let it so be crucified with Thee,
That it may be forever joined to Thee.

VIII

Sweet Jesus, loving God, I cry to Thee ;
Though guilty, yet I come for love of Thee ;
O show Thyself, dear Saviour, kind to me !
Unworthy as I am, O turn to me,
Nor at thy sacred Feet abandon me !

IX

Dear Jesus, bathed in tears, I kneel to Thee ;
In shame and grief I lift my eyes to Thee ;
Prostrate before Thy Cross I bow to Thee,
And thy dear Feet embrace ; O look on me,
Yea, from Thy Cross, look, and pardon me.

O amator peccatorum,
Reparator confractorum,
dulcis Pater pauperum

V

Quicquid est in me confractum,
Dissipatum aut distractum,
Dulcis Jesu, totum sana,
Tu restanra, tu complana,
Tam pio medicamine.

VI

Te in tuo cruce quaero,
Prout queo, corde mero,
Me sanabis hie et spero,
Sana me et salvus ero,
In tuo lavans sanguine.

VII

Plagas tuas rubicundas,
Et fixuras tam profundas ;
Cordi meo fac inscribi,
Ut Configar totus tibi,
Te modis amans omnibus.

VIII

Dulcis Jesu, pie Deus,
At te clamo licet reus,
Praebe mihi te benignum,
Ne repellas me indignum,
De tuis sanctis pedibus.

IX

Coram crucem procumbentem,
Hosque pedes complectentem,
Jesu bone, non me spernas,
Sed de cruce sancta cernas,
Compassionis gratia.

X

O my Beloved, stretched against that Tree,
Whose arms divine are now enfolding me,
Whose gracious Heart is now upholding me,-
O my Beloved, let me wholly be
Transformed, forgiven, one alone with thee !

PART II. -TO THE KNEES

I

O JESUS, King of Saints, I worship Thee ;
O hope of sinners, hail ! I rest on Thee ;
True God, true man, Thou hangest on the Tree
Transfixed, with quivering flesh and shaking knee*
A criminal esteemed, I worship Thee.

II

Alas, how poor, how naked, wilt Thou be !
How hast Thou stript Thyself for love of me,
How made Thyself a gazing-stock to be !
Not forced, but, O my God ! how willingly
In all Thy limbs Thou sufferest on that Tree !

III

Thy Precious Blood wells forth abundantly
From all Thy open wounds incessantly ;
All bathed therein, O God, in agony
Thou standest on the Cross of infamy,
Awaiting the appointed hour to die.

IV

O infinite, wondrous majesty !
O terrible, unheard-of poverty !
Ah, who, returning so great charity,
Is willing, Jesus, thus to give for Thee
His blood for Thine, in faithful love for Thee!

X

In hac cruce stans directe

Vide me, mi dilecte,

Ad te totum me converte,

Esto sanus, dic aperte,

Dimitto tibi omnia.

PARS II -AD GENUA

I

SALVE, Jesu, Rex sanctorum,
Spes votiva peccatorum,
Crucis ligno tanquam reus,
Pendens homo, verus Deus,
Caducis nutans genibus.

II

O quam pauper ! O quam nudus !
Qualis est in cruce ludus,
Derisorum totus factus,
Sponte tamen, non coactus,
Attritus membris omnibus,

III

Sanguis tunc abundanter
Fusus, fluit incessanter,
Totus lotus in cruore,
Stas in maximo dolore,
Praecinctus vili tegmine.

IV

O majestas infinita !
O egestas inaudita !
Quis pro tanta caritate
Quaerit te in veritate,
Dans sanguinem pro sanguine !

V

O Jesus, how shall I, then, answer Thee,
Who am so vile, and have not followed Thee!
Or how repay the love that loveth me
With such sublime, such awful charity
Transfixed, from double death to set me free !

VI

O Jesus, what Thy love hath been for me!
O Jesus, death could never conquer Thee !
Ah, with what loving care Thou keepest me
Enfolded in Thine arms, lest I should be,
By death of sin, a moment torn from Thee !

VII

Behold, Jesus, how for love of Thee,
With all my soul I trembling cling to Thee,
And Thy dear Knees embrace. O pity me !
Thou knowest why in pity bear with me,
And overlook the shame that covers me !

VIII

O let the Blood I worship flow on me,
That what I do may never anger Thee ;
The Blood which flows at every pore from Thee
Each imperfection may it wash from me,
That I may undefiled and perfect be.

IX

O force me, best Beloved, to draw to Thee,
Transfixed and bleeding on the shameful Tree,
Despised and stretched in dying agony !
All my desire, Lord, is fixed on Thee ;
call me, then, and I will follow Thee.

X

I have no other love, dear Lord, but Thee ;
Thou art my first and last ; I cling to Thee.

V

Quid sum tibi responsurus,
Actu vilis, corde durus ?
Quid rependam amatori
Qui elegit pro me mori,
Ne dupla morti morerer?

VI

Amor tuis amor fortis,
Quern non vincunt jura mortis ;
O quam pia me sub cura
Tua foves in pressura,
Ne morsu mortis vulnerer.

VII

Ecce tuo prae amore,
Te complector cum rubore,
Me coopto diligenter,
Tu scis causam evidenter,
Sed suffer et dissimula.

VIII

Hoc quod ago non te gravet,
Sed me sanut et me lavet,
Inquinatum et aegrotum,
Sanguis fluens hic per totum,
Ut non supersit macula.

IX

In hac cruce te cruentem,
Te contemptum et distentum,
Ut requiram me impelle,
Et hoc imple meum velle,
Facturus quod desidero.

X

Ut te quaeram menti pura,
Sit haec mea prima cura,
It is no labor, Lord ; love sets me free ;
Then heal me, cleanse me, let me rest on Thee-
For love is life, and life is love in Thee.

PART III. -TO THE HANDS

I

HAIL, holy Shepherd ! Lord, I worship Thee,
Fatigued with combat, steeped in misery ;
Whose sacred Hands, outstretched in agony,
All pierced and dislocated on the Tree,
Are fastened to the wood of infamy.

II

Dear holy Hands, I humbly worship ye,
With roses filled, fresh blossoms of that Tree ;
The cruel iron enters into ye,
While open gashes yield unceasingly
The precious stream down-dropping from the Tree.

III

Behold, Thy Blood, Jesus, flows on me
The price of my salvation falls on me ;
O ruddy as the rose, it drops on me.
Sweet Precious Blood, it wells abundantly
From both Thy sacred Hands to set me free.

IV

My heart leaps up, Jesus, unto Thee ;
Drawn by those nail-pierced Hands it flies to Thee ;
Drawn by those Blood-stained Hands stretched out
for me,
My soul breaks out with sighing unto Thee,

And longs to slake its thirst, O Love, in Thee.
Non est labor, nec gravabor,
Sed sanabor et mundabor,
Cum te complexus fuero.

PARS III. -AD MANU8

I

SALVE, Jesu, Pastor bone,
Fatigatus in agone,
Qui per lignum es distractus,
Et ad lignum es compactus,
Expansis sanctis manibus

II

Manus sanctae, vos avete,
Rosis novis adimpletae,
Hos ad ramos dure junctae,
Et cmdeli ferro punctae,
Tot guttis decurrentibus.

III

Ecce fluit circumquaque,
Manu tua de utraque,
Sanguis tuus copiose,
Rubicundus instar rosae,
Magnae salutis pretium.

IV

Manus clavis perforatas,
Et cruore purpuratas,
Corde primo prae amore,
Sitibundo bibens ore,
Cruoris stillicidium.

V

My God, what great stupendous charity—
Both good and bad are welcomed here by Thee !
The slothful heart Thou drawest graciously,
The loving one Thou callest tenderly,
And unto all a pardon grantest free.

VI

Behold, I now present myself to Thee,
Who dost present thy bleeding Hands to me ;
The sick Thou healest when they come to Thee ;
Thou canst not, therefore, turn away from me,
Whose love Thou knowest, Lord, is all for Thee.

VII

O my Beloved, fastened to the Tree,
Draw, by Thy love, my senses unto Thee ;
My will, my intellect, my memory,
And all I am, make subject unto Thee,
In whose dear arms alone is liberty.

VIII

O draw me for Thy Cross's sake to Thee ;
O draw me for Thy so wide charity ;
Sweet Jesus, draw my heart in truth to Thee,
O put an end to all my misery,
And crown me with Thy Cross and victory !

IX

O Jesus, place Thy sacred Hands on me,
With transport let me kiss them tenderly,
With groans and tears embrace them fervently ;
And, O for these deep wounds I worship Thee ;
And for the blessed drops that fall on me !

X

O dearest Jesus, I commend to Thee
Myself, and all I am, most perfectly ;

V

O quam large te exponis,
Promptus mails atque bonis,
Trahis pigros, pios vocas,
Et in tuis ulnis locas
Faratis gratis omnibus.

VI

Ecce tibi me praesento,
Vulnerato et cruento,
Semper aegris misereria,
De me ergo ne graveris,
Qui praesto es amantibus.

VII

In hac cruce sic intensus,
In te meos trahe sensns,
Meum posse, velle, scire,
Cruci tuae fac servire,
Me tuis apta brachiis.

VIII

In tam lata charitate,
Trahe me in veritate,
Propter crucem tuam almam,
Trahe me ad crucis palmam,
Dans finem meis vitiis,

IX

Manus sanctae vos amplector,
Et gemendo condelector,
Grates ago plangis tantis
Clavis duris, guttis sanctis,
Dans lacrymas cum osoulis

X

In cruore tuo lotum,
Me commendo tibi lotum,
Bathed in Thy Blood, behold, I live for Thee ;
O, may Thy blessed Hands encompass me,
And in extremity deliver me !

PART IV. -TO THE SIDE

I

O JESUS, highest Good, I yearn for Thee;
O Jesus, merciful, I hope in Thee,
Whose sacred Body hangs upon the Tree,
Whose limbs, all dislocated painfully,
Are stretched in torture, all for love of me !

II

Hail, sacred Side of Jesus I verily
The hidden spring of mercy lies in Thee,
The source of honeyed sweetness dwells in Thee,
The fountain of redemption flows from Thee,
The secret well of love that cleanses me.

III

Behold, O King of Love, I draw to Thee ;
If I am wrong, Jesus, pardon me ;
Thy love, Beloved, calls me lovingly,
As I with blushing cheek gaze willingly
Upon the living wound that bleeds for me.

IV

O gentle opening, I worship Thee ;
O open door and deep, I look in Thee ;
O most pure stream, I gaze and gaze on Thee:
More ruddy than the rose, I draw to Thee ;
More healing than all health, I fly to Thee.

v

More sweet than wine Thine odor is for me ;
 Tuæ sanctæ manus istæ
Me defendant, Jesu Christe,
Extremis in periculis.

PARS IV. -AD LATUS

I

SALVE, Jesu, summe bonus,
Ad parcendum nimis pronus,
Membra tua macilenta
Quam acerbe sunt disenta,
In ramo crucis torrida.

II

Salve, latus Salvatoris,
In quo latet mel dulcoris,
In quo patet vis amoris,
Ex quo scatet fons cruoris,
Qui corda lavat sordida.

III

Ecce tibi appropinquo,
Parce Jesu si delinquo,
Verecunda quidem fronte,
Ad te tamen veni sponte,
Scrutari tua vulnera.

IV

Salve, mitis apertura,
De qua manat vena pura,
Perta patens et profunda,
Super rosam rubicunda,
Medela salutifera.

V

Odor tuus super vinum,
The poisoned breath of sin it drives from me ;
Thou art the draught of life poured out for me.
O ye who thirst, come, drink thereof with me;
And Thou, sweet wound, O open unto me.

VI

O red wound open, let me draw to Thee,
And let my throbbing heart be filled from Thee!
Ah, see ! my heart, Beloved, faints for Thee.
my Beloved, open unto me,
That I may pass and lose myself in Thee.

VII

Lord, with my mouth I touch and worship Thee,
With all the strength I have I cling to Thee,
With all my love I plunge my heart in Thee,
My very life-blood would I draw from Thee,
Jesus, Jesus I draw me into Thee !

VIII

How Sweet Thy savor is ! Who tastes of Thee,
Jesus Christ, can relish naught but Thee ;
Who tastes Thy living sweetness lives by Thee ;
All else is void the soul must die for Thee ;
So faints my heart, so would I die for Thee ;

IX

I languish, Lord ! let me hide in Thee I
In Thy sweet Side, my Love, O bury me !
And may the fire divine consuming Thee
Burn in my heart where it lies hid in Thee,
Without a fear reposing peacefully !

X

When in the hour of death Thou callest me,
O Love of loves, may my soul enter Thee ;
May my last breath, Jesus fly to Thee ;
no fierce beast may drive my heart from Thee,
But in Thy Side may it remain with Thee ‘
Virus pellens serpentinum,
Potus tuus potus vitae,
Qui sititis huc venite,
Tu dulce vulnus aperi.

VI

Plaga rubens aperire,
Fac cor meum te sentire,
Sine me in te transire,
Vellem totus introire,
Pulsanti pande pauperi.

VII

Ore meo te contingo,
Et ardenter ad me stringo
In te meum cor contingo,
Et ferventi corde lingo,
Me totum in te trajice.

VIII

O quam dulcis sapor iste !
Qui te gustat Jesu Christe,
Tuo victus a dulcore
Mori possit prae amore,
Te unum amans unice.

IX

In hac fossa me reconde,

Infer meum cor profunde,
Ubi latens incalescat,
Et in pace conquiescat,
Nec prorsus quemquam timeat.

X

Hora mortis meus flatus,
Intret Jesu, tuum latus,
Hinc expirans in te vadat,
Ne hunc leo trux invadat,
Sed apud te permaneat.

PART V. -TO THE BREAST

I

O GOD of my salvation, hail to Thee !
O Jesus, sweetest Love, all hail to Thee !
O venerable Breast, I worship Thee :
O dwelling place of love, I fly to Thee,
With trembling touch adore and worship Thee.

II

Hail, throne of the Most Holy Trinity !
Hail, ark immense of tender charity !
Thou stay of weakness and infirmity,
Sweet rest of weary souls who rest on Thee,
Dear couch of loving ones who lean on Thee !

III

With reverence, O Love, I kneel to Thee,
O worthy to be ever sought by me ;
Behold me, Jesus, looking unto Thee.
O, set my heart on fire, dear Love, from Thee,
And burn it in the flame that burns in Thee.

IV

O make my breast a precious home for thee,
A furnace o sweet love and purity,
A well of holy grief and piety ;
Deny my will, conform it unto Thee,
That grace abundant may be mine in Thee.

V

Sweet Jesus, loving Shepherd, come to me ;
Dear Son of God and Mary, come to me ;
Kind Father come, let Thy Heart pity me,

PARS V. -AD PECTUS

I

SALVE, salua mea Deus,
Jesu dulcis amor meus ;
Salve, pectus, reverendum,
Cum tremore contingendum,
Amoris domicilium,

II

Ave, thronus Trinitatis,
Arca latae charitatis,
Firmamentum infirmatis,
Pax et pausa fatigatis,
Humilium triclinium.

III

Salve, Jesu reverende,
Digne semper inquirende,
Me praesentem hic attende,
Accedentem me succende,
Praecordiali gratia,

IV

Pectus mini confer mundum,
Ardens, pium, gemebunduio,
Voluntatem abnegatam,
Tibi semper conformatam,
Juncba virtutum copia.

V

Jesu dulcis, Pastor pie,
Fili Dei et Mariae,
Largo fonte tui cordis,
And cleanse the fountain of my misery
In that great fountain of Thy clemency.

VI

Hail, fruitful splendor of the Deity !
Hail, fruitful figure of Divinity !
From the full treasure of Thy charity,
O pour some gift in Thy benignity
Upon the desolate who cry to Thee!

VII

Dear Breast of most sweet Jesus, mine would be
All Thine in its entire conformity ;
Absolve it from all sin, and set it free,
That it may burn with ardent charity,
And never, never cease to think on Thee.

VIII

Abyss of wisdom from eternity,
The harmonies of angels worship Thee ;
Entrancing sweetness flows, Breast, from thee
John tasted it as he lay rapt on Thee ;
grant me thus that I may dwell in Thee !

IX

Hail, fountain deep of God's benignity !
The fulness of the immense Divinity
Hath found at last a creature home in Thee.
Ah, may the counsel that I learn from Thee
All imperfection purify in me !

X

True temple of the Godhead, hail to Thee !
draw me in Thy gracious charity,
Thou ark of goodness, full of grace for me.
Great God of all, have mercy upon me,
And on Thy right hand keep a place for me.
Faeditatem meae sordis
Benigne Pater dilue.

VI

Ave, splendor et figura,
Summi Dei genitura,
De thesauris tuis plenis,
Desolatis et egenis,
Manus clementer perflue.

VII

Dulcis Jesu Christ! pectus,
Tuo fiam dono rectus,
Absolutus a peccatis,
Ardens igne charitatis,
Ut semper te recogitem.

VIII

Tu abyssus es sophiae,
Angelorum harmoniae
Te collaudant, ex te fluxit
Quod Joannes cubans suxit,
In te fac ut inhabitem.

IX

Ave, fons benignitatis,
Plenitudo Deitatis
Corporalis in te manet,

Vanitatem in me sanet,
Quod tu confers consilium.

X

Ave, verum templum Dei,
Precor miserere mei,
Tu totius arca boni,
Fac electis me apponi,
Vas dives, Deus omnium.

PART VI. -TO THE FACE

I

HAIL, bleeding Head of Jesus, hail to Thee !
Thou thorn-crowned Head, I humbly worship
Thee!
O wounded Head, I lift my hands to Thee ;
O lovely Face besmeared, I gaze on Thee ;
O bruised and livid Face, look down on me.

II

Hail, beauteous Face of Jesus, bent on me,
Whom angel choirs adore exultantly!
Hail, sweetest Face of Jesus, bruised for me
Hail, Holy One, whose glorious Face for me
Is shorn of beauty on that fatal Tree !

III

All strength, all freshness, is gone forth from Thee:
What wonder ! hath not God afflicted Thee,
And is not death himself approaching Thee?
O Love ! but death hath laid his touch on Thee,
And faint and broken features turn to me.

IV

O have they thus maltreated Thee, my own ?
O have they Thy sweet Face despised, my own ?
And all for my unworthy sake, my own !
O in Thy beauty turn to me. my own ;

O turn one look of love on me, my own !

V

In this Thy Passion, Lord, remember me;
In this Thy pain, O Love, acknowledge me ;
The honey of whose lips was shed on me,
The milk of whose delights hath strengthened me
Whose sweetness is beyond delight for me !

VI

Despise me not, O Love , I long for Thee ;
Contemn me not, unworthy though I be ;

PARS VL -AD FACIEM

I

SALVE, caput cruentatum,
Totum spinis coronatum,
Conquassatum, vulneratum,
Arundine verberatum,
Facie sputis illita.

II

Salve, ejus dulcis vultus,
Immutatus et incultus,
Immutavit suum florem,
Totus versus in pallorem,
Quem laudat coeli curia.

III

Omnis vigor atque viror
Hinc recessit, non admiror,
Mors apparet in aspectu,
Totus pendens in defectu,
Attritus aegra macie.

IV

Sic affectus, sic despectus,
Propter me sic interfectus,
Peccatori tam indigno,
Cum amoris intersigno,
Appare clara facie.

V

In hac tua passione
Me agnosce, Pastor bone,
Cujus sumpsi mel exore,
Haustum lactis cum dulcore,
Prae omnibus deliciis.

VI

Non me reum asperneris,
Nec indignum dedigneris,
But now that death is fast approaching Thee,
Incline Thy Head, my Love, my Love, to me,
To these poor arms, and let it rest on me !

VII

Thy holy Passion I would share with Thee,
And in Thy dying love rejoice with Thee ;
Content if by this Cross I die with Thee ;
Content, Thou knowest, Lord, how willingly
Where I have lived to die for love of Thee.

VIII

For this Thy bitter death all thanks to Thee,
Dear Jesus, and Thy wondrous love for me !
O gracious God, so merciful to me,
Do as Thy guilty one entreateth Thee,
And at the end let me be found with Thee !

IX

When from this life, Love, Thou callest me,
Then, Jesus, be not wanting unto me,
But in the dreadful hour of agony,
O hasten, Lord, and be Thou nigh to me,
Defend, protect, and O deliver me.

X

When Thou, O God, shalt bid my soul be free,
Then, dearest Jesus, show Thyself to me !
O condescend to show Thyself to me,
Upon Thy saving Cross, dear Lord, to me,-
And let me die, my Love, embracing Thee !

PART VII. -TO THE SACRED HEART

I

HAIL, sacred Heart of God's great Majesty!
Hail, sweetest Heart, my heart saluteth Thee!
With great desire, O Heart, I seek for Thee,
And faint for joy, Heart, embracing Thee ;
Then give me leave, Love, to speak to Thee,
Morte tibi jam vicina,
Tuum caput hic inclina,
In meis pausa brachiis,

VII

Tuae sanctae passioni
Me gauderem interponi,
In hac cruce tecum mori,
Praesta crucis amatori
Sub cruce tua moriar

VIII

Morte tuae tam amarae
Grates ago, Jesu chare,
Qui es clemens, pie Deus,
Fac quod petit tuus reus,
Ut absque to non finiar.

IX

Dum me mori est necesse,
Noli mihi tune deesse,

In tremenda mortis hora,
Veni Jesu, absque mora,
Tuere me et libera.

X

Cum me jubes emigrare,
Jesu chare, tunc appare.
O amotor amplexende,
Temet ipsum tunc ostende,
In cruce salutifera.

PARS VII. -AD COR

I

SUMMI Regis cor aveto,

Te saluto corde laeto,

Te complecti me delectat,

Et hoc meum cor affectat,

Ut ad te loauar animea.

With what sweet love Thou languishedst for me !

What pain and torment was that love to Thee !

How didst Thou all Thyself exhaust for me !

How hast Thou wholly given Thyself to me,

That death no longer might have hold of me !

II

O bitter death and cruel ! can it be

Thou darest so to enter greedily

Into that cell divine ? O can it be

The Life of life, that lives there gloriously,

Should feel thy bite, O death, and yield to thee ?

IV

For Thy death's sake which Thou didst bear for me,

When Thou, O sweetest Heart, didst faint for me,

O Heart most precious in its agony,

See how I yearn, and longing turn to Thee !

Yield to my love, and draw me unto Thee !

V

O sacred Heart, beloved most tenderly,
Cleanse Thou my own ; more worthy let it be,
All hardened as it is with vanity ;
O make it tender, loving, fearing Thee,
And all its icy coldness drive from me.

VI

O sinner as I am, I come to Thee ;
My very vitals throb and call for Thee ;
O Love, sweet love, draw hither unto me!
O Heart of Love, my heart would ravished be,
And sicken with the wound of love for Thee !

VII

Dilate and open, Heart of love, for me,
And like a rose of wond'rous fragrance be,
Sweet Heart of love, united unto me ;
Anoint and pierce my heart, O Love, with Thee,
How can he suffer, Lord, who loveth Thee ?

II

Quo amore vincebaris,
Quo dolore torquebaris,
Cum te totum exhaurires,
Ut te nobis impartires,
Et nos a morte tolleres ?

III

O mors ilia ! quam amara,
Quam immitis, quam avara,
Quae per cellam introivit,
In qua mundi vita vivit,
Te mordens cor dulcissimum.

IV

Propter mortem quern tulisti,
Quando pro me defecisti,
Cordis mei Cor dilectum,
In te meum fer affectum,
Hoc est quod opto plurimum.

V

O Cor dulce praedilectum,
Munda cor meum illectum,
Et in vanis induratum,
Pium fac et timoratum,
Repulso tetro frigori.

VI

Per medullam cordis mei,
Peccatoris atque rei,
Tuus amor transferatur,
Quo cor totum rapiatur,
Languens amoris vulnere.

VII

Dilatare, aperire,
Tanquam rosa fragrans mire,
Cordi meo te conjunge,
Unge illud et compunge,
Qui amat te quid patitur ?

VIII

O Heart of Love, who vanquished is by Thee
Knows nothing, but beside himself must be ;
No bounds are set to that sweet liberty,
No moderation, he must fly to Thee,
Or die he must of many deaths for Thee.

IX

My living heart, O Love, cries out for Thee ;
With all its strength, O Love, my soul loves Thee ;
O Heart of Love, incline Thou unto me,
That I with burning love may turn to Thee,
And with devoted breast recline on Thee !

X

In that sweet furnace let me live for Thee,
Nor let the sleep of sloth encumber me ;
O let me sing to Thee and weep to Thee,
Adore, and magnify, and honor Thee,
And always take my full delight in Thee.

XI

Thou Rose of wondrous fragrance, open wide,
And bring my heart into Thy wounded Side,
O sweet Heart, open ! draw Thy loving bride,
All panting with desires intensified,
And satisfy her love unsatisfied.

XII

Unite my heart, Jesus, unto Thine,
And let Thy wounded love be found in mine.
Ah, if my heart, dear love, be made like Thine
O will it not be pierced with darts divine,
The sweet reproach of love that thrills through Thine !

XIII

O Jesus, draw my heart within Thy Breast,
That it may be by Thee alone possessed.
O Love, in that sweet pain it would find rest,
In that entrancing sorrow would be blest,
And lose itself in joy upon Thy Breast.

XIV

Behold, O Jesus, how it draws to Thee !
O call it, that it may remain in Thee !
See with what large desire it thirsts for Thee !
Reprove it not, O Love ; it loves but Thee :
Then bid it live by one sweet taste of Thee !

VIII

Quidnam agat nescit vere,
Nee se valet cohibere ;
Nullum modum dat amori,
Multa morte vellet mori,
Amore quisquis vincitur.

IX

Viva cordis voce clamo,
Dulce cor, te namque amo ;
Ad cor meum inclinare,
Ut se possit applicare,
Devoto tibi pectore.

X

Tuo vivat in amore,
Nec dormitet in torpore ;
Ad te oret, ad te ploret,
Te adoret, te honoret,
Et fruens omne tempore.

XI

Rosa cordis aperire,
Cujus odor fragrat mire,
Te dignare dilitare,
Fac cor meum anhelare,
Flamma desiderii.

XII

Da cor cordi sociari,
Tecum, Jesu. vulnerari ;
Nam cor cordi similatur,
Si cor meum perforatur,
Sagittis improperii.

XIII

Infer tuum intra sinum
Cor, ut tibi sit vicinum,
In dolore gaudio,
Cum deformi specioso,
Quod vix seipsum capiat.

XIV

Hic repauset, hic moretur,
Ecce jam post te movetur,
Te ardenter vult sitire,
Jesu, noli contraire,
Ut bene de te sentiat.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

SAINT BONAVENTURE

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THE LIFE OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

THE author of "The Imitation" has warned us, that in reading devout books, we should not pay overmuch attention to the question "who said this?" but "attend to what is said." And this caution is important, as a guard against the vulgar practice of investing sayings and writings with a factitious value, simply because they proceed from some one who has rank or position. Yet "the authority of the writer" must not be altogether left out of our calculation, when, as in the present instance, it is founded upon the combined possession of sanctity and wisdom. These are intrinsic qualities; and to attempt to divide the consideration of the book in such a case from the life of the author, would be like the endeavour to separate the rays of light from the orb from which they emanate. We will commence, then, with a brief account of S. Bonaventure himself, and then make some introductory comments on his "Life of Christ."

In the little and picturesque town of Bagdarea, in Tuscany, John of Fidenza was born, in A.D. 1221, of pious and noble parents. The name of John was given him in Holy Baptism, but he is always known by that of Bonaventure, which sometimes had the former name added to it. The following story accounts for his new title. At the age of four years he was dangerously ill, and when the disease from which he was suffering had gone beyond the reach of physicians, his mother—for her son was "her sole consolation and dear hope"—betook herself to S. Francis of Assisi, and in an agony of grief threw herself at his feet, beseeching him to pray for the restoration of her child. S. Francis, touched with pity, granted her request, and John of Fidenza recovered. S. Francis conceived a tender love for the child, and when the Saint was himself nearing the confines of another world, he, with a sort of prophetic rapture, predicting the great services which John would render to the Church, cried out, "O buona ventura!" And henceforth John became Bonaventure. His mother, in gratitude for his recovery, dedicated her son to God. Thus S. Bonaventure was like S.

Augustine, the result of a mother's tears. Mary of Ritelli resembles Monica in her devotion to her child; but Bonaventure was in one respect unlike Augustine, although he himself would not allow you to believe this. From his earliest years he was filled with the love of God; his spiritual life was not built on a previous ruin, but on a holy childhood and youth.

He took the first opportunity of fulfilling the vow which his mother had made, and at the age of twenty-two entered the Order of S. Francis, of which he was one day to become one of the brightest ornaments. He was now brought under the influence of two Englishmen; first of Haymo, the General of the Order, and afterwards, in Paris, of "The Irrefragable Doctor," Alexander of Hales. It was at this period of his life that he first came into contact with Aquinas, and an intimate friendship sprang up between them. Both had the gift of genius in the supernatural as well as the natural sphere. Their friendship has been compared to that which existed between S. Basil and S. Gregory Nazianzen.

S. Bonaventure made rapid progress in theology, scholastic philosophy, and, what is more, in his own spiritual life, during the time he spent in the University of Paris, whither he had been sent by his superiors, to complete his studies.

Perhaps in every spiritual life there is a dominant feature; at any rate, there was in the life of Bonaventure: it was his intense humility. It is the virtue which, beyond all others, he sets before us for imitation in the "Life of Christ." Though devotion, poverty, and charity are conspicuous gems in his spiritual treasury, the most brilliant of all is humility. It is said that he often felt his unworthiness to such an extent, that he dared not approach the Holy Table. When his reputation for learning was at its highest, and astonished even those who knew him best, S. Thomas himself sharing that amazement, and wondering from what sources his friend gained his wisdom and knowledge, one day questioned Bonaventure upon this point, whereupon the Saint pointed to Christ upon the Cross, and replied, "I study Christ, and Him crucified."

Bonaventure became professor of philosophy at thirty-three, which was two years short of the required age for filling a public chair in the University. And two years after, in 1256, a further dignity awaited him, in conjunction with his friend, Aquinas; Alexander IV. called them both to receive the Doctor's cap. Here the humility of the two Saints proved an

inconvenience, for either wanted the other to take precedence; and it was not until after a severe struggle that S. Thomas at last gave way, and was first made Doctor.

Bonaventure was also elected General of his Order. He must have had some acquaintance with English ideas from one who had occupied the very chair to which he was destined to succeed; but a further connection with this country was now offered him. In 1265, he was asked by Clement IV. to accept the Archbishopric of York, but he declined the honour. In chapter thirty-five of the following work we may, perhaps, discover the thoughts which guided him in refusing this post of dignity. He was not one of those who are “ever ready for honours, for the highest posts, ecclesiastical dignities—formidable even for the shoulders of angels to bear.” However, his *nolo episcopari* was soon to be overruled, for Gregory X. made him a Cardinal, and Bishop of Albano. He had, of course, to be found, before he could be brought acquainted with the twofold distinction which awaited him. Two Papal nuncios were accordingly despatched, and Bonaventure was summoned to Rome. It is said, that the messengers who bore with them the insignia of the Cardinalate discovered Bonaventure in his grey tunic and knotted girdle, engaged in the menial but necessary duty of washing the plates in a court of the monastery, after his brethren had refreshed themselves at a meal; and that he asked the new arrivals to hang up the hat for a few minutes, until he had finished the task before him.

S. Bonaventure was a man of extraordinary influence, and lived at one of the great epochs of history, the crises of society. Western Christianity had reached its zenith of greatness and of power. S. Bonaventure arose amid a galaxy of saints and philosophers; it was the age of S. Dominic, S. Francis, S. Louis, S. Thomas, of Roger Bacon, Alexander of Hales, Albert the Great, and Dun Scotus. Some of these luminaries were rising, some setting; but amidst them all Bonaventure shines with a special lustre, his rays marked by a red glow, a mystic fervour, the reflection of a S. Bernard and of the two S. Victors, which gave him the name of “The Seraphic Doctor.”

He became General of his Order at a time when “it needed, according to Dean Milman, “all his commanding gentleness, unrivalled learning, and depth of piety” to deal with the disputes amongst and concerning the Franciscans, and to ward off the fatal schism then impending. S. Bonaventure added statesmanship to piety, and thus healed for a time the

wounds which passion and fanaticism had inflicted on his Order. S. Louis, who had a special regard for Bonaventure, and often entertained him, took, of course, the side of the Mendicants, and followed S. Bonaventure's advice in this, as in other matters.

But the great enterprise in which his pacific powers were finally exercised, was that for the reunion of Western with Eastern Christendom. The purpose of the second Council of Lyons was to establish peace throughout Christendom, and Michael Palæologus was most desirous that the schism should be healed. S. Bonaventure was the most conspicuous figure in the assembly, though five hundred bishops and seventy abbots, besides a multitude of dignitaries, were present. S. Bonaventure preached during the sittings of the Council, which commenced on May 7, A.D. 1274, and died before its close, S. Thomas having died on his way to it. The act for the reunion of West and East, though so soon to be set aside, was passed mostly through the influence of the Seraphic Doctor. The Latin clergy chanted the Nicene Creed in Latin, the Greek in Greek, the "filioque" clause being thrice repeated, before the conclusion of the Council: but Bonaventure had passed to his heavenly reward. He was taken with sickness, which continued to his death, and deprived him of the consolation of the Blessed Sacrament and its support for the last journey. He died on July 14, 1274, the day on which he is commemorated in the Roman Calendar, being fifty-three years of age. Cardinal Peter of Tarentaise preached his funeral sermon, taking for his text, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan." On the morrow, at the fifth session of the Council, the Pope, with deep emotion, announced the death of Bonaventure, adding, "Cecidit columna Christianitatis." Bonaventure was canonized not only at the request of ecclesiastics, but of the reigning monarchs of Europe. And Sixtus V. placed his name amongst the Doctors of the Church.

To give an idea of the extent of S. Bonaventure's writings, it may be mentioned, that the Vatican Edition fills seven folio volumes. In the edition from which the following translation is made (1668) his works are divided into four large tomes, each containing about a thousand foolscap pages with double columns. Two of these volumes are occupied with profound dissertations on Peter Lombard's "Book of Sentences;" one with an exposition of different parts of Holy Scripture; and the fourth is a collection of mystical treatises, etc., of which the following work forms one.

It is important, before reading S. Bonaventure's "Life of Christ," to know what to expect and what not to expect. It is not an expository commentary on the Holy Gospels, nor does it aim at setting before us in one continuous history the various acts of our Divine Lord. Of the beginning and close of Christ's Life, S. Bonaventure's method is to leave no event unrecorded; but during His Public Ministry, he is content to make a selection from our Lord's words and actions. There is a long digression of about a dozen chapters on the relative scope and value of the Active and the Contemplative Life, which, we believe, has never before formed a part of any English translation of this work, if we except "The Mirrour of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ," the oldest English translation. On account of the spiritual beauty of these chapters, we have translated the whole of them.

S. Bonaventure, in his "Life of Christ," endeavours throughout to fix the gaze of the soul on the Divine Object. He is continually pointing to the Face of our Lord, and ever bidding us "contemplate Him." He avoids the mistake of enlarging upon the surroundings to the detriment of the central Figure. Beauty of scenery, historic association, local custom, are all of value, if they lead the attention up to, and do not tend to draw it away from, the Life Itself. S. Bonaventure is content to set before us the Acts and Sufferings of Christ. Each chapter is a "picturing" of Him; each, a sort of idyll rather than a commentary. He constantly reminds us that we must be present in spirit, and watch the scene "as if it took place before our own eyes."

But, as in painting an event of which we have only a written record, there will be much which must be necessarily filled in by the imagination; so in these meditations on the "Life of Christ," we have not only set before us what actually took place, but also what the Saint thought was likely to have happened. Facts are necessary for faith, and the *lex credendi* must be the foundation of the *lex orandi*, but devotion may in some measure be excited by pious opinion. S. Bonaventure adds lights and shadows of his own, and enriches the subject here and there from the store of a devout imagination. Some will delight in these additions, perhaps attributing them to the illumination of the Holy Spirit acting directly on the mind of a Saint; whilst others may reject them as fanciful and puerile. As an instance of this mode of supplying incidents which may have occurred, but are not recorded, we may point to the eighty-fourth chapter, which contains a meditation for Holy Saturday. In it, Peter is described as coming to and knocking at the

door of the house where the Blessed Virgin and John were abiding; and John is represented as opening the door at the request of the Blessed Mother, and admitting Peter. Peter enters, manifesting signs of deep sorrow and remorse, and says, "I am ashamed of myself; I ought not to make any appearance before others; because my Lord, who loved me so greatly, I have abandoned and denied." There are many instances in the "Life of Christ" in which S. Bonaventure in a similar manner relates events, or some details of events, as he supposed that they might have happened. He warns his readers not to regard such matters as "low and childish;" and at the same time occasionally reminds them that they are not what may be called "Gospel Truths," but simply the creations of his devout imagination.

Sometimes S. Bonaventure suggests two ways in which an action might have taken place, and leaves his readers to make a choice between them. Such an alternative may be found in the accounts of the Paschal Supper, and of the Crucifixion. Of the former the Saint says, "Observe that you may view this in either of two ways: one, that the disciples sit at table as I have said; the other, that they stand erect with staves in their hands." Of the latter, we read, "Some there are who think that this was not the method of Crucifixion, i.e. by making our Lord ascend a ladder before the nailing of His Body to the Cross; but that they fastened Him to the Cross when it was laid on the ground before it was raised." S. Bonaventure is not dogmatic, except when he thinks he is backed by the letter of Scripture, and by the authority of "ancient authors." His purpose is not to be critical or simply instructive, but to excite the affections and to influence the will; and in furtherance of this end, he will sometimes introduce a legend or a story, which doubtless was likely to have greater effect upon himself and those whom he had in view, than it may have upon us now.

It must be borne in mind that Bonaventure is an Italian, a Franciscan, and that he lived in the thirteenth century; and will hardly, therefore, be expected to view things from the same standpoint as an Englishman, a man of the world, and one whose lot is cast in the nineteenth century. As a general rule it is found that interpretations of Scriptural precepts to some degree reflect the spirit of the age in which they are made, and the circumstances of the commentator. The "Life of Christ" is viewed through the medium of a Rule which insisted on poverty as its prime principle, world-renunciation, and simplicity. Thus we find Bonaventure enforcing

poverty continually, and delighting to picture His Divine Master “barefoot,” and taking His repasts “outside the towns and dwellings of men,” “sitting on the ground,” drinking “from some stream.” The Saint does not with equal force dwell on the other side of the comprehensive character of Christ,—“the Son of Man came eating and drinking.” A member of a Mendicant Order would be likely to represent our Lord not only as poor and having nowhere to lay His Head; but further, as seeking alms and occasionally begging for a subsistence. At the door of some poor man Christ craves admission, we are told, during the three days when He was lost at Jerusalem. During the Hidden Life of Nazareth, again, Christ is depicted doing the humble offices, setting out “the frugal board,” arranging the dormitory, etc. When money is offered Him, the Holy Child is not a little abashed, yet holds out His hand to receive it, “out of love for poverty.” Everything which seems to fall in with the circumstances of the life of the Franciscan has, of course, a special charm for Bonaventure. The bride of S. Francis was poverty, and he loved it in its lowest form—mendicancy.

Especially in S. Bonaventure’s estimate of embroidery and ornamental work, we see the austere simplicity of the follower of the Saint of Assisi, and therefore receive his denunciation of all “superfluous and curious workmanship” with respectful limitation. Bonaventure gives six different reasons for fleeing from the making and using of such trifles “as from a venomous serpent.” He is careful, however, to exclude from his searching condemnation “works of art, devoted to the decoration of Churches.” But he only says he does not condemn all such; for the Franciscan Ritual was of the simplest character, and the vestments of the poorest material. The gorgeous services which were soon to be witnessed in the Church of Assisi bore witness to a departure from the spirit of S. Francis. The question may occur,—Would it not have been wise to omit the Seraphic Doctor’s views as to the iniquities of embroidery? The reply is, that much wholesome warning is contained in his six reasons, which may still be of good service as cautions against certain faults which may readily attach themselves to an innocent employment. And it is evident that it was the evil, not so much in the occupation, as in the dispositions and aims which are apt to take possession of the minds of those whose fingers are thus employed, which S. Bonaventure had himself in view.

There are two other points to which we must allude before concluding these introductory comments. The Blessed Virgin, in S. Bonaventure's "Life of Christ," less indeed than in some other of his works, holds a prominent position. Here and there an expression has been slightly modified or left out with regard to the mother of our Lord. Even the title "Mother of God," though it has the authority of a General Council, has not been inserted, lest those unaccustomed to it should take offence or alarm. It cannot be denied that the warmth of S. Bonaventure's character and his passion for mysticism betrayed him into expressions of excessive devotion towards the Blessed Virgin in some of his Works, though the Psalter of the Blessed Virgin Mary is probably not to be included amongst them. But whatever his love for her might have been, it is quite evident that he never lost sight of the infinite difference between the most exalted creature and the Incarnate God. One quotation from chapter ten, "Of the Delay of the Blessed Virgin at the Manger," will be sufficient proof of this assertion. "With what reverence, caution, and timorous care did" His mother "handle Him, Whom she knew to be her Lord and her God, falling on her knees when she took Him from the manger, or placed Him in it!" And it is manifest also, that no love for the creature was allowed to come into competition with the love of the Creator in the soul of Bonaventure. In his "Itinerary of the Soul to God," he rises with illumined intellect and inflamed affections to the primal Source of Light and Love; he finds no rest in creatures. "Christ is the Way, Christ the Door, Christ the Ladder, the Mercy-seat," etc.; "Let us pass with Christ crucified to the Father;" "Little or nothing is to be attributed to the creature: all to the Creative Essence—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." "The soul, to be at rest, must pass into union with God." These qualifications are essential, if we would rightly estimate the position which Mary held in the mind and heart of the Saint. In his "Life of Christ" he is careful throughout, whatever may be his love for the Mother, to fix our eyes and our hearts on the Son as the Central Figure.

We have thought, on the whole, that it was advisable to retain the eighty-sixth chapter, which relates the appearance of our Lord on Easter Day first to His Mother. To leave it out would have been to act inconsistently, as in other parts of the Work we have retained probable occurrences. Moreover, as has been before pointed out, Bishop Jeremy Taylor, in his "Life of Christ," alludes to this event, when he says, when "our Lord had comforted

the souls of the Fathers with the presence of His Spirit, so now He saw it to be time to bring comfort to His holy mother.” It may be objected that such an appearance to our Lord’s mother may not be classed among “probable occurrences,” as S. Mark declared that Christ first appeared to S. Mary Magdalene. The decision which is arrived at on this question must depend upon the exact meaning which is attached to the word “first.” If it is taken absolutely, then the appearance of Christ to the Blessed Virgin before all others, cannot be regarded as a probable or possible event; if, however, “first” is only regarded as a relative term, in reference to the Apostles, then it will be allowable to imagine that natural love was permitted to have its free exercise on the morning of the Resurrection; and that therefore, though unrecorded, as S. Bonaventure himself reminds us the event is, our Lord’s first visitation was made to her who bore Him. S. Bonaventure does not hold, as some, that our Lord remained in the company of His mother during the Great Forty Days; but concludes that He abode within the folds of the inner world, from which He emerged from time to time for the purpose of appearing to His disciples.

The other point to be noticed is the way in which S. Bonaventure does not shrink from picturing our Lord in the performance of menial actions, and from giving the details of His Human Life and Sufferings. Some decline to depict what may be called the lower side of our Lord’s Life—and it is truly so described, for He is “equal to the Father, as touching His Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching His Manhood”—out of a mistaken regard for His Divinity. And for this reason it has been supposed, that the Evangelist of the Godhead, S. John, excludes from His Gospel those scenes of deepest humiliation, the Agony in the Garden, and the forsaking on the Cross; whereas the explanation of these omissions may, perhaps, rather be found in the complementary character of his Gospel. To fear to dwell upon all that relates to our Lord’s Human Nature, arises from a feeble grasp of the Mystery of the Incarnation; as though in some way He must be less Divine if really human. When once the cardinal truth that Christ was not a human person but a Divine Person is fully admitted, then every action of His Manhood may be safely contemplated. If any one wishes to see what S. Bonaventure says on this point, he will find it in his treatment of the question “whether it can be allowed that Christ was a human person,” in Tom. iii. 110–115. There it is laid down that our Lord

may not be regarded as a man united to the Divine Word, but as a Divine Person only, who assumed our manhood. His Divine Personality makes Christ “to be called and to be truly God.” It is not, then, reverence, but want of right faith, which would find ground of offence in the “Life of Christ,” because that Life is depicted after too human a manner.

We will conclude with two observations which are to be found in the “Devout Life.” S. Francis de Sales says, with regard to meditation on the Life of Christ, “I commend earnest mental Prayer to you, most particularly such as bears upon the Life and Passion of our Lord. It is not without meaning that the Saviour calls Himself the Bread come down from heaven;—just as we eat bread with all manner of food, so we need to meditate and feed upon our Dear Lord in every prayer and action. His Life has been meditated upon and written about by various authors.” Again, “You should have some good devout book at hand, such as the writings of S. Bonaventure.” Such is the opinion of S. Francis de Sales as to the necessity of ever setting before our eyes the Life of Christ, and his sense of the value of the writings of the author of this book.

To quote another authority: Gerson says, “In my opinion one of the best authors that a man can read is Eustachius, for so we may translate his name of Bonaventure.... most proper and safe for the enlightening of the judgment and inflaming the heart.”

In almost all instances in this translation we have inserted the text of the Bible or Prayer-Book, and where it has been found necessary, for the sake of the meaning, to preserve the original Vulgate, we have intimated the same, by adding “V.” to the marginal references.

W. H. H.

THE WARDEN’S LODGE, CLEWER,
Epiphany, 1881.

PREFACE

AMONG the many commendations passed on the virtues and excellence of the holy virgin Cecilia, it is reported of her that she was in the habit of carrying, hidden in her bosom, the Gospel of Christ. By this we are to understand that she selected from the Life of the Lord Jesus, as recorded in the Gospel, some passages which more especially stirred her devotion, upon which she meditated day and night with pure and undivided heart, with attention and earnestness; going over them again and again without leaving out any, and ruminating upon them with sweetness and delight, she laid them up in her inmost heart. I advise you to do the same. Above all other things, too, for I believe that in the pursuit of the spiritual life this practice is most necessary, and most beneficial, and that which is calculated to lead to a higher state. For nowhere will you find such teaching to arm you against vain and fleeting flatteries—against tribulations and adversities, against the temptations of enemies and vices—as in the Life of the Lord Jesus, the Life which had no defect and had every perfection. Indeed, from the frequent and habitual meditation on His Life, the soul is drawn into a certain familiarity, confidence, and love of Him, so that other things are counted worthless and are despised. Moreover, we are thereby strengthened and taught, what to do, and what to avoid.

And first, I say, that the constant meditation on the Life of the Lord Jesus strengthens and renders steady the mind against vain and fleeting things, as appears in the case of the blessed Cecilia to whom I have alluded, whose heart was so filled with the Life of Christ, that into it no vanity could enter. Even amidst the pomp of her nuptials, when there was so much display, singing, and music, she remained with her heart fixed upon God alone, saying to Him, “O Lord, cause my heart and my body to be undefiled, that I be not confounded.”

Secondly, the Life of Jesus fortifies us in the midst of tribulations and adversities, as is manifest in the sufferings of the martyrs. Concerning this

S. Bernard thus speaks: “Whence does the martyr gain the resolution to suffer, but from the Wounds of Christ, which he contemplates with all devotion, and in which, by constant meditation, he dwells? Therein the martyr stands jubilant and triumphant, though his whole body is being torn to pieces and mangled on the rack. Where then is the soul of the martyr? Where—but in the Wounds of Jesus, those Wounds open to receive him. Had it been in the depths of his own being, he would, dwelling upon his sufferings, have become so conscious of them, that he would have succumbed and denied the faith.” From the same source, not only martyrs, but also confessors, in their tribulations and infirmities, had, and always have, so great patience. If you read of S. Francis and the virgin S. Clare, you will find how, in manifold tribulations, deprivations, and infirmities, they not only remained patient, but even joyful. The same is manifested to-day by those who lead a holy life; and it arises from the fact that their souls neither were nor are simply in their own bodies, but by devout meditation upon His Life were in Christ.

Thirdly, I say, that the Life of Jesus teaches us what we ought to do, insomuch that neither enemies nor vices can assault or deceive us, when we have in Him the perfection of virtues. For where else will you find such virtues—such exalted poverty, exceeding lowliness, profound wisdom, examples of prayer, meekness, obedience, patience, and all other virtues, and doctrine, as in the Life of the Lord of Hosts? Accordingly S. Bernard thus sums up this matter: “He labours in vain in the pursuit of virtues, who expects to find them anywhere but in the Lord of Hosts, Whose doctrine is the school of prudence, Whose mercy is the work of justice, Whose Life is the mirror of temperance, Whose Death is the mark of fortitude.” He, therefore, who follows Him can neither err nor be deceived; to the imitation and pursuit of Whose virtues, the heart is kindled and animated by frequent meditation. At length he is enlightened by virtue and so clothed with it, that he discerns truth from falsehood; thus it is that many illiterate persons have become versed in the great and profound mysteries of God. How think you, did S. Francis attain to such abundance of virtues, to such deep insight into the meaning of Scripture, to such clear discernment of the illusions of spiritual foes and vices, but from familiar conversation with and meditation upon the Lord Jesus? Hence it was, that he was so ardently attached to the Life of Christ, that his own life became a picture of it. For he imitated it in

the practice of all virtues as perfectly as he could; and at length, Jesus, it is said, completed and perfected the likeness by the imprint of His Sacred Wounds, so that he became wholly transformed into Him. You see, then, to what an eminent state the soul attains by meditating on the Life of Christ; and yet this is but, as it were, a foundation upon which it can rise to more sublime degrees of contemplation. For the unction which is found therein, by degrees purifies and elevates the soul, and imparts to it all knowledge. With this, however, we are not now concerned.

But now I propose to introduce you to the meditations themselves on the Life of Christ; though I would that you had a more experienced and learned guide, for I am most unequal to undertake such a task. But as I judge it to be more to your advantage to say something, whatever it be, than to remain quite silent, I will make trial of my poor powers, and speak with you familiarly, in a plain and unpolished style, which you will the more easily understand, and which will make you study not so much to gratify the ear as to improve the heart. For it is not to ornaments of speech, but to meditation on the Life of Christ, that I want you to give your attention. S. Jerome reminds us of this when he says, “Plain words reach even to the heart; but polished sentences feed the ears.” Yet I hope that my slender powers may prove of some benefit to your imperfect state. But what I hope still more is, that, if you exercise yourself with careful meditation herein, the Lord Himself, on whom we are discoursing, will become your Master. You are not, however, to expect that we shall be able to meditate on everything which Christ said or did, or to think that we have a record of all. But in order to make a deeper impression on the mind, I shall relate those things as if they had actually happened, in such ways as it is possible they may have happened, according to certain imaginary representations which the mind is capable in different ways of forming. For it is allowable to meditate upon, explain, and understand Holy Scripture in many ways, as we conceive to be most expedient; provided that there is nothing contrary to the truth of Christ’s Life, righteousness, and doctrine, and nothing contrary to faith and good morals. But when you find me saying, the Lord Jesus thus spoke or acted, or whatever else is introduced of that kind; if it is unable to be verified by Scripture, you must regard it merely as the effect of devout meditation. That is, take it as if I said, you can imagine that the Lord Jesus spoke or acted thus, and so of the rest. But if from this work you desire to

gain fruit, you must bring yourself to be present at those things which are related as said or done by Christ, as if you heard them with your own ears, and saw them with your own eyes, your whole mind being diligently, gratefully, and carefully applied to them—all other cares and anxieties having been for the time set aside. Wherefore I pray you, beloved friend, that this my task, which I have undertaken for the honour of the Lord Jesus, for your profit and my own advantage, you will accept gladly; and joyfully, devoutly, and diligently turn it to account. We must begin with the Incarnation; but before entering upon the consideration of that Mystery, we can meditate upon God and His blessed angels in Heaven, and also upon the Blessed Virgin on earth, subjects which seem first to demand our attention. We will, then, now begin to contemplate them.

CHAPTER I

Respecting the Deep Concern the Angels had for us

WHEN for an immense period of time, more than four thousand years, the human race lay in misery, on account of the sin of the first man, not one soul being able to soar to his native Country; the blessed angelical spirits, we can imagine, compassionated so great a fall, and anxious for the restoration of their own ranks, when “the fulness of time” had now come, assembling themselves together, presented themselves before God, and falling down on their faces before Him, devoutly and earnestly pressed upon Him their supplications and said, “O Lord, it pleased Thy Majesty to make the rational creature, namely man, because of Thy goodness, that he might be here with us, and that the restoration of our numbers might be brought about by his presence. But behold! the whole race is perishing, and not one is saved; and throughout the ages which are past we see our enemies triumphing over all, when instead of our ranks being filled up; the caverns of hell are crowded. Wherefore then, O Lord, didst Thou make man? ‘Why are the souls which confess to Thee, delivered to beasts?’ And if this be in accord with Thy justice, yet now is the time of mercy. And if their first parents unwarily transgressed Thy commandment, let Thy mercy come to their help. Remember that Thou didst create them in Thy own likeness. Extend, O Lord, mercifully Thy hand to them, and replenish them mercifully. The eyes of all look to Thee, ‘as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters,’ until Thou wilt have mercy, and deliver the human race by a saving remedy.”

CHAPTER II

Of the Contention between Mercy and Justice, Truth and Peace

WHEN this address was ended, represent to yourself Mercy in union with Peace, beating at the heart of the Father, asking for help; but Truth, in union with Justice, taking the opposite side. And between them there was a great contention, as S. Bernard relates in his beautiful and diffuse style. But I will, as concisely as possible, give the sum of what he says. For I intend often to introduce his mellifluous words, but, for the most part, condensed for the sake of brevity. Thus, in this place what he says is as follows. Mercy said unto the Lord, “Wilt Thou, O Lord, cast man away for ever, or wilt Thou forget to show mercy?” This was whispered in the ears of the Almighty continuously for a long time. The Lord replied, “Let your sisters be called whom you see ready to oppose you, and let us hear what they say.” The two attributes being summoned, Mercy resumed: “The rational creature stands in need of Divine commiseration, for he has become miserable, yes, full of misery, and the time for mercy has already come and is passing away.” Truth interrupts: “The Lord must keep His word which He has spoken. Let Adam and all his race who were in him die, when through disobedience he tasted the forbidden fruit.” Mercy replied, “Wherefore then, O Lord, hast Thou made me? For Truth itself must own there is reason for this question, if you forbear for ever to have mercy.” “On the other hand,” says Truth, “if the transgressor evades Thy sentence, Truth must perish, and cannot remain for ever.” Hence this contention was referred to the Son, before whom Truth and Mercy repeated their respective claims; and Truth added, “I confess, O Lord, that Mercy may be moved by a good zeal, but not according to Justice, which would rather spare the transgressor

than her sister attribute.” But Mercy rejoins, “You spare neither, but are so fierce with anger against the transgressor, that you involve me, your sister, in his destruction.” But Truth, unmoved, urges her cause most strongly: “O Lord, Thou art involved in this question, and it is for Thee to hinder the sentence of Thy Father from being made void.” Peace now began to speak: “Cease this contention; it is not right for attributes to dispute each other’s claims.” The controversy, however, seemed momentous, and the reasons which were urged on both sides valid and powerful. There appeared to be no way of preserving both Mercy and Truth in reference to man. But the King wrote the sentence, which He gave to Peace, being nearest to His throne, to read and deliver. It ran thus: “One says, ‘I perish if Adam does not die;’ the other says, ‘I perish if he does not find mercy.’ Let death become a good thing, and let both have what they ask.” All were amazed at the wisdom of this decree, and agreed that Adam should die, and so obtain mercy. But how, sought they, can death be made good, seeing that the bare sound of the word conveys horror? The King answered, “The death of sinners is most dreadful, but the death of the saints is ‘precious,’ and the gate of life. Let one be found who, though not subject to death, dies out of love. He, not being subject to it, cannot be holden by it, but will force his way through death, and make a passage through which those who are freed can follow him.” All acquiesced in this. But “where can such a one be found?” was the question. Then Truth went back to earth, and Mercy remained in heaven. As the Prophet says, “Thy Mercy, O Lord, is in heaven, and Thy Truth reacheth even to the clouds.” And it encompasses the world. But no one was found pure from the stain of sin, not even the infant of a day old. But Mercy searched throughout heaven, and found no one who had love enough to undertake this work. For all of us are servants, who, when we have done well, ought to say according to that which is written in S. Luke, “We are unprofitable servants.” And as none could be found who had such charity as to lay down his life for unprofitable servants, they, Mercy and Truth, returned at the appointed day. Not having found what they sought for, Peace said, “Know ye not, or have ye forgotten, that ‘there is none that doeth good, no, not one’? He alone who gave you this counsel can bring it to pass.” When the King saw this He said, “It repenteth Me that I have made man. I must repent on behalf of man whom I have made.” And Gabriel being called He said, “Go, tell the daughter of Zion,

Behold, thy King cometh unto thee.” Thus far are the words of S. Bernard. You see, then, how great is the danger which sin causes, and how difficult it is to find a remedy. The before-mentioned attributes were best brought into harmony, it would seem, in the Person of the Son. For the Person of the Father, in a certain way, appeared terrible and powerful, so that Peace and Mercy had cause for apprehension. Then the Person of the Spirit is most benign, and so Truth and Justice had cause for apprehension. Therefore the Person of the Son was accepted as in the mean between the Two, to work out this remedy. This, however, you must understand not in a literal but in a descriptive sense. Then was that prediction fulfilled—“Mercy and Truth have met together; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.”

Thus, much we have said of that contention upon which we may piously meditate, and which we may conceive had some real counterpart in heavenly things.

CHAPTER III

Of the Life of the Virgin Mary, and her Seven Petitions

CONCERNING the life of the Virgin, through whom the Incarnation was wrought, we may make one meditation. You may imagine her, in the third year of her age, as offered by her parents in the Temple to God, and then as being continuously there until her fourteenth year. But of what happened during that period, we should not be left in ignorance, if we accepted the account in the following revelation, which, it is said, was vouchsafed to S. Elizabeth. Among other things, it is reported that these details were told her:—"When," said the Virgin, "my father and my mother left me in the Temple, I decreed in my heart to take God for my Father; and I devoutly and frequently considered what I might do to render myself pleasing in His sight, that He might vouchsafe to grant me His grace; and I made myself learn the law of my God. But of all the precepts of the Divine Law, there were three precepts which I most of all preserved in my heart; viz. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength;' also, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;' also, 'Thou shalt hate the enemies of thy soul.' These I kept, indeed, in my mind, and at once all the virtues comprised in them I possessed, and so I wish you to do. But the soul cannot have any virtue if God is not loved with all the heart; for from that love flows the fulness of all grace, and without it no grace can flow into the soul, nor can it abide in it. So will it also run away like water, unless the soul hates its enemies; that is, its vices and sins. He who desires, therefore, to have and to retain grace within him, must order aright the passions of love and hatred. I would then have you do as I did. I rose, indeed, always at night, and went before the

altar of the Temple, and with all the desire and longing and affection which I possessed, I sought for grace from the Almighty God to observe these three precepts, and all the other commandments of the law. And thus, whilst standing before the altar, I made these seven petitions to the Lord:—

“First, indeed, I asked for the grace, whereby I might be able to fulfil the precept of love; viz. to ‘love the Lord with all the heart,’ etc.

“Secondly, I asked for grace, that I might be able to love my neighbour, according to His will and good pleasure, and that I might love all things which He loves and chooses.

“Thirdly, I asked for grace, that I might hate and avoid all things which He hates.

“Fourthly, I asked for lowliness, patience, gentleness, and meekness, and for all virtues which might render me more pleasing in His sight.

“Fifthly, I besought Him to let me see the time when that blessed Virgin should be born, who should bring forth the Son of God, and that He would preserve my sight, that I might see her; my tongue, that I might praise her; my hands, that I might serve her; my feet, that I might go to minister to her; my knees, that I might adore the Son of God on her lap.

“Sixthly, I sought for grace, to obey the precepts and directions of the High Priest of the Temple.

“Seventhly, I prayed that the Temple and all the people of God might be preserved for His service.”

The handmaid of Christ, when she had heard this, exclaimed, “O most amiable lady, are not you full of grace and of virtues?”

The Blessed Virgin replied, “Know for certain, that I regard myself as guilty, as vile, as unworthy of the grace of God as you. Therefore I thus pray for grace and virtues.” And again she said, “Daughter, do you imagine that all the grace which is given to me has come to me without any effort on my part? Indeed it is not so; for no grace, or gift or virtue, have I received from God without great effort, continual prayer, ardent desire, deep devotion, many tears, and much self-discipline, and without striving in every thought and deed to the best of my knowledge and power to please Him. In saying this, I except (as all must do) the first grace, which was given to me for my sanctification.” And she added, “Know for certain, that grace never descends into a soul, unless through prayer and mortification. But after we have rendered to God what we can, poor indeed as it is, grace

comes into our soul, bearing with it His highest gifts, so that the soul seems to lose itself, and to lose its memory, and no remembrance to remain of anything said or done, as pleasing to God, and to become to itself more vile and contemptible than ever.”

This we have taken from the aforesaid revelations.

S. Jerome, however, writes thus concerning the life of the Blessed Virgin: —“The Blessed Virgin made for herself this rule, that she should continue in prayer from the morning to the third hour; that she should occupy herself in outward work from the third to the ninth hour; and from the ninth hour again she returned to prayer, and did not cease from it, until (it is said) the angel appeared to her from whose hand she was accustomed to receive her food, and through converse with whom she increased in the service and love of God. It came to pass, that at vigils she was the first; that she excelled in the wisdom of the Divine Law; that she was remarkable for lowliness; that she sang most sweetly the psalms of David; that she was most glorious in charity; that she was most chaste in purity, most perfect in every virtue. She was constant and firm, and when in contact with variableness in others, no one ever saw her or heard her angry. Her every word was so full of grace, that the Presence of God was made evident through her tongue. She continued constantly in prayer and in the study of the law of God. She was ever anxious about her companions, lest any of them should sin in word, or burst forth with inordinate laughter, or lest any one should offend an equal by violence and pride. She unceasingly blessed God; and lest perchance the greetings which she bestowed upon others who saluted her should in any way detract from the praises of God, she made it a custom to reply, ‘Thanks be to God.’ Thus the habit of holy persons saluting one another by the words ‘Thanks be to God,’ gained ground. The food which the angel is said to have given to her she received; and that which from the High Priest of the Temple she accepted, she gave to the poor. Daily this angel was said to converse with her, and to obey her as if she were a very dear sister or mother.”

Thus far S. Jerome.

In her fourteenth year, the Blessed Virgin Mary, according to tradition, was espoused to Joseph, through Divine revelation, and returned to Nazareth; the details of this event you may find in the legend of her birth. Such things we may conceive of as happening before the Incarnation of the

Lord Jesus. You should ruminate upon them, and draw delight from them, as at least the expression of a devout mind, and copy that devotion which is so conspicuous throughout them. Now let us proceed to the Mystery of the Incarnation.

CHAPTER IV

Concerning the Incarnation of Christ

AFTER that “the fulness of time” was come, and the Sovereign Trinity had deliberated on the means of providing for the recovery of mankind, by the Incarnation of the Word, on account of the great love with which He loved the human race; moved by His mercy (the heavenly spirits, too, eagerly desiring it) Almighty God, when the Blessed Virgin had returned to Nazareth, summoned the Archangel Gabriel. Imagine him thus addressed: —“Go to our most beloved daughter, Mary, who is espoused to Joseph, and above all, creatures most dear to Us; and tell her that My Son ‘greatly desires her beauty’ and hath chosen her to be His mother. And desire her to receive Him joyfully, because through her instrumentality I have decreed that the salvation of the whole human race should be effected, and I will remember their offence against Me no more.”

Give your attention to this point, and remember what I said to you in the beginning; viz., learn in all that is said and done, to imagine yourself to be actually present. Here you can conceive of God, as far as may be, as a pure Spirit; regard Him at any rate as a great King, seated on His high Throne, having a benign, kind, and fatherly look, longing to reconcile us to Himself or to be reconciled to us, and saying these words; Gabriel at the same time with bright and cheerful face, with bended knees, with downcast and reverential look, listening attentively to the message of his Lord. Then Gabriel, rising brightly and exultingly, speeds away from the heavenly regions, and quick as thought appears in human guise before the Virgin Mary, who was in the inner chamber of her little dwelling. But although his flight was so rapid, that God who is omnipresent had preceded him, for he found the Holy Trinity there when he came.

For you should know that the great Work of the Incarnation was the Work of the Whole Trinity, although the Person of the Son Alone became incarnate. As when one puts on a coat, and two standing at the sides help him, and hold the sleeves of the coat. Here then be very attentive, and as if present at the mystery itself, consider all that is said and done. O what material for meditation may not now be found in that humble dwelling, where such persons are present, and such actions are accomplished! For although the Holy Trinity is everywhere present, yet in this place and at this time you may regard Him as especially present, by reason of His singular operation. The angel Gabriel, then, the faithful friend of the Bridegroom, having entered, we may represent him to ourselves as thus addressing the Virgin Mary: “Hail! highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.” But she being disturbed, made no reply. Her disturbance was not from guilty confusion, nor from the angelic apparition, for with such sights she is supposed to have been familiar, but according to the words of the Evangelist, “she was troubled at his saying,” as she considered the novelty of this salutation—so different from his accustomed mode of greeting her. When in this salutation she saw that she was in three ways commended, the lowly Virgin could not but be disturbed. For she was commended because she was full of grace, because the Lord was with her, and as blessed above all women; but the humble cannot hear commendation without shame and confusion of face. She was troubled then from a virtuous and proper bashfulness. Moreover, she was somewhat afraid to give credence to what had been told her; not that she distrusted the angel’s veracity, but because it is the mark of the humble, not to examine their virtues but to dwell on their defects, that so they may make continual progress by reputed their virtue to be little, and their defects very great. As therefore a prudent, cautious, fearful, and bashful maid, she was silent. For what could she have answered? Learn, then, from her example to love silence and quietness, for it is a virtue of great price and utility. The angel twice had spoken before she made any reply, for talkativeness in a maiden is an abomination. Then the angel, understanding the cause of her doubt, said, “Fear not, Mary,” nor be abashed by the praises I have declared to you, for they are true; for thou art not only full of grace, but art to be an instrument for restoring grace to all mankind, and hast found favour with God. For behold, thou shalt conceive, and bring forth the Son of the

Highest, Who hath chosen thee for His mother, and Who will save all who trust in Him. Then she replied, not, however, admitting or denying the praises which were bestowed on her, but wishing to be informed concerning the manner of the mystery, about which she was much in doubt, whether she should cease to be a virgin. Therefore she inquired of the angel, “How shall this be”—perhaps she had dedicated her virginity most firmly to her God—“seeing I know not a man?” And the angel said, “It shall be done through the operation of the Holy Ghost, who shall fill thee in a singular manner, and thou shalt conceive by His power, and thy virginity be preserved; and therefore thy son shall be called the Son of God. For nothing is impossible with Him. Thy cousin Elizabeth hath also conceived a son in her old age through the power of God, and this is the sixth month with her who was barren.”

Here regard yourself in the Presence of God, and consider how the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity awaited the answer and consent of Their beloved child, lovingly and complacently beholding her bashful demeanour and expression. See, too, how diligently and wisely the angel induces her, ordering his words, standing with reverent posture before the Virgin, with calm and placid countenance, faithfully fulfilling his embassy, and attentively listening to the words of her reply, that he may be able to convey them, and in this wonderful work to carry out the will of God. And how did she stand, reverently and humbly, and with bashful look, receiving the angel’s unexpected message without elation or thought of self! And when she heard these great tidings about herself, such as none other ever heard, she ascribed the whole to Divine grace. Learn, then, from her example to be modest and humble, because without these virginity is of little value. With great prudence the Virgin then rejoices, and having heard the words of the angel, gives her consent. In her revelations, she is reported to have knelt with profound devotion and with clasped hands as she said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.” At that instant the mystery of the Incarnation was wrought, and the Son of God took her flesh, yet remained entire in the bosom of the Father. But you can piously imagine, how the Son Himself, undertaking this laborious embassy of obedience, inclined and commended Himself to the Father, in the same instant that His soul was created and infused into the womb of the Virgin. Being perfect Man, according to all the features of the body, but very small;

He naturally grew as others do—His Soul as to its faculties, and His Body as to its members, being perfect from the first. For He was perfect God as well as perfect man, and as wise and powerful as He is now. Gabriel then accompanied the Blessed Virgin in her act of devotion; he knelt awhile, and then bending took his leave of her, and returning to his own country, related what had taken place, and—there was new joy there, and a new festival, and very great exultation! But the Virgin was all inflamed, and more than usually enkindled with the love of God when she became sensible that she had conceived; falling down on her knees we may depict her, as she gave thanks for so great a gift, humbly and devoutly beseeching God to instruct her, so that she might not fail in any of those things which she ought to do for her Son.

You ought then to consider how great is this day's solemnity, and to rejoice in your heart, and to keep it as a day of gladness. It is a day unheard of from the beginning of time until now. Such a day is devoted to the honour of God the Father, who made a marriage for His Son by the espousal of human nature, which to-day the Son united inseparably to Himself. To-day is also the solemnity of the Son's nuptials, and the commencement of His life in the womb, from which He is to pass into the world. To-day is likewise sacred to the Holy Ghost, through whose wonderful and singular co-operation the work of the Incarnation was effected; and to-day He began to show His singular kindness to mankind. To-day is also the glorious solemnity of the Blessed Virgin, who has a relation to the Father, as a daughter; to the Son, as His mother; and to the Holy Ghost as in a manner a spouse. To-day is also the Festival of the whole Heavenly Court, because the gap in their ranks began to be repaired. But more especially is this day the Festival of the human race, because salvation and redemption date from it, and the reconciliation, exaltation, and deification of humanity. On this day the Son received the new command from the Father, that He should accomplish our salvation. On this day, coming forth from the highest heaven, "He rejoiced as a giant to run His course," and entered into the garden of the Virgin's womb. On this day also, He was made one of us and our brother, and began to sojourn among us. To-day from Heaven the true Light descended, to remove and chase away the clouds of darkness. On this day the living bread, which giveth life unto the world, was as it were prepared for us in the vessel of the Virgin's

womb. To-day, “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” To-day, the cries and desires of Patriarchs and Prophets were heard and fulfilled. They gave what vent they could to their inexpressible longings in such words as these: “Send ye the Lamb;” and again: “Drop down, ye heavens, from above;” and again “O that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down;” and again: “Bow Thy heavens, O Lord, and come down;” and again: “Show us Thy Countenance, O Lord;” and with similar acts of desire, of which the Scriptures are full, for this day was most ardently expected. This day is the beginning and foundation of all solemnities, and the source of all our good. For hitherto the Lord had been wroth with man on account of the transgression of his first parents, but now beholding His Son made man, His anger was turned away. This day is called “the fulness of time.” You see a wonderful work and most solemn mystery accomplished, in which all is sweet, all desirable, all to be received with devotion, solemnized with transports of joy and exultation, and worthy of the deepest veneration. Meditate, then, on these things, delight and take pleasure in them; and perhaps the Lord will grant you a deeper insight into them, etc.

CHAPTER V

How the Blessed Virgin visited Elizabeth; and how the “Magnificat” and “Benedictus” were composed

AFTER this, the Blessed Virgin, recalling the words of the angel concerning her cousin Elizabeth, resolved to visit her with a view to congratulating her, and also of offering her services to her. Whereupon she went, together with her husband, Joseph, from Nazareth towards her cousin's house, which was fourteen or fifteen miles distant from Jerusalem, or thereabouts. She was not deterred either by the roughness of the road or by the length of the journey, but went “with haste,” being unwilling to be seen long in public. Her condition was not burdensome to her, as it ordinarily is in such states. Picture to yourself, then, how she journeyed with her husband, not as a queen, borne amidst an escort of soldiers or barons, nor with an assembly of courtly ladies in attendance, but simply on foot. She was accompanied, however, with poverty, humility, and modesty, and a train of honourable virtues; but not with the pomp and vanity of the world. And when she reached the house and entered it, she saluted Elizabeth, saying, we may suppose, “Hail, my sister Elizabeth.” Whereupon Elizabeth, exulting and in transports of joy, and enkindled by the Holy Ghost, arises and embraces her most tenderly, and exclaimed with joy, “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” And no sooner had the Virgin saluted Elizabeth, than both John in the womb and his mother were filled with the Holy Ghost. Nor is the mother filled before the son, but the son, first filled, then fills the mother; not operating anything

in the soul of the mother, but effecting that something should be wrought in her by the Holy Ghost, insomuch as the grace of the Holy Ghost was more affluently diffused in him, and he first became conscious of his grace. Thus, as she was sensible of Mary's presence, so was he conscious of the approach of the Lord; and thus he leapt for joy, and she prophesied.

Consider what great force there is in the Virgin's words, for which a special communication of the Spirit was given. For she was so abundantly filled with the Holy Ghost, that from her He overflowed to others. And Mary replied to Elizabeth, and said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," and the rest of that sweet song of praise. Then, preparing to sit, picture the most lowly Virgin taking the lowest place at the feet of Elizabeth; but Elizabeth, quickly rising, will not allow this, and placed her by her side. Mutual inquiries about the mysteries which were wrought in them followed, and they joyously congratulated each other, and together praised God for their privileges, and gave Him thanks, and so passed those joyous days. The Virgin remained there about three months, ministering to and serving Elizabeth as far as she was able, humbly, reverently, and devoutly, as if forgetful that she was to become the mother of our Lord, and was of queenly dignity. O what a home, what a roof, what a resting-place was that which was occupied by such mothers about to bring forth such sons: Mary and Elizabeth, Jesus and John! There, too, are those grand old men, Zachariah and Joseph.

When her time was fully come, Elizabeth brought forth her son, which Mary received, and carefully attended to. The little one, it is said, as if intelligent, gazed on her, and when she delivered him to his mother, still turned towards her, as if he could delight in her alone, while she delighted in playing with him, and embraced and sweetly kissed him. Consider the greatness of John. No one had ever had such a nurse; many other great privileges were his, on which at present I will not dwell.

On the eighth day the boy was circumcised, and was called John. And then was opened the mouth of Zacharias, and he prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," etc. Thus in that house were composed those two most beautiful canticles, the "Magnificat" and the "Benedictus." But the Virgin, it may be, stood by a sort of curtain, so as not to be seen by those who were present at the ceremony of Circumcision, and listened attentively to the canticle in which mention was made of her son, and most

prudently hid all those things in her heart. Then, bidding Elizabeth, Zacharias, and John farewell, she returned to her own home in Nazareth. In this return contemplate again her poverty. She returns to a house in which neither bread, nor wine, nor any other necessary was to be found. And she had no possessions or money from which she might supply her needs. The three months during which she had remained with her relations were probably passed in comparative comfort; but now she returns to poverty, and has to labour with her own hands to gain a livelihood. Compassionate her, and be inflamed with a love of poverty.

CHAPTER VI

How Joseph willed to put away Mary; and how God permits His Faithful Servants to be Afflicted

BUT when the Blessed Virgin and her spouse, Joseph, had dwelt together, and her condition had become evident, Joseph was grieved beyond measure when he perceived it. Give your best attention here, for you will be able to learn many fair lessons. If you are surprised that the Lord willed that His mother should be espoused, and yet willed that she should ever continue a virgin, there are three reasons to be assigned for such a course. First, that her state might not expose her to infamy; secondly, that she might be provided with the loving services and society of her husband; thirdly, that the mystery of the Divine Conception might be veiled from the Devil.

Joseph again and again regarded his spouse, and was grieved and disturbed, and turned away with confusion of face as if averting his eyes from a criminal, suspecting her to be guilty of adultery. You see how God suffers His people to be harassed by tribulations and tempted, in preparing them for their crown.

Joseph was turning over in his mind what course he should pursue, and resolved to put away his wife privately. Truly about this it may be said, that his praise is in the Gospel; for it is said there that he was a just man, and here we have the mark of great virtue. For it is commonly admitted, that the greatest cause of shame, sorrow, and anger which a man can have is the unfaithfulness of his wife; and yet Joseph restrained himself by virtue, and was unwilling to accuse his wife, patiently letting this great injury pass, not

avenging himself, but yielding to goodness and piety. He resolved to put her away secretly.

Nor was the Blessed Virgin exempted from this trial, for she saw her husband's concern, and she was troubled for his sake. Nevertheless she kept silence, and in her lowliness concealed the gift of God. She preferred to be accounted vile herself than to divulge the Divine secret, and to tell that about herself which might have the appearance of vanity. But she besought the Lord that He would deign to provide some remedy, and remove this trial from her husband and herself. Observe how great this affliction and perplexity was to them both, but the Lord sent relief; for an Angel came to Joseph, and told him in a dream that his wife had conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and that he was trustfully and joyfully to remain with her. Then, all anxiety ceasing, intense comfort followed. And thus will it happen to all, if only when they are in tribulation they know how to preserve patience; for after a storm God sends a calm. Nor ought you to doubt that God permits trials to come to His own people, only with a view to their profit.

Joseph then inquired about this marvellous Conception, and the Virgin faithfully related the particulars of it to him; and he remained with her thenceforward, rejoicing in the society of his blessed spouse. No words can express with how chaste a love he loved her, and how faithfully he ministered to her; and the Blessed Virgin trusted herself to him, and joyfully shared his low estate.

Then the Lord Jesus remained in His mother's womb nine months, as others do, patiently and benignly waiting until the due time arrived. We ought much to compassionate Him, reduced to such a depth of lowliness. How ought we then to exert ourselves to obtain this virtue; nor should we ever yield to pride or to the inflation of self-conceit, seeing that the Lord of Majesty has stooped so low! And for this second proof of His love, in being so long a captive for us, how can we ever sufficiently requite Him? At least let us heartily acknowledge it, and with the utmost affection give Him thanks for having chosen us out of the rest of mankind, to make Him the slender return of giving up the love of the world in order to devote ourselves to His service. Indeed, it is from no merit of our own, but from His goodness, that we can live to Him; yet this life is highly acceptable to Him, and a praiseworthy service. Our life of retirement from the world is

not for punishment, but for safety. In the harbour of Religion we are safely sheltered, for thither neither the poisoned darts of this wicked world, nor the storms of its tempestuous sea, can reach us, save through our own temerity. Let us, then, endeavour as much as possible, by withdrawing our minds from all transitory things, to gain purity of heart; for bodily seclusion is of little or no avail, unless the mind be also withdrawn from the world.

Learn, then, to compassionate our Lord Jesus, who was in continual affliction from the moment of His Conception unto His Death, because He knew that His Father, Whom He loved supremely, would be forsaken by sinners and dishonoured for the sake of idols; and He saw with the pity which He had for souls created in His own image, those souls miserably and on all sides plunged in ruin, and this was a greater pain to Him than His bodily sufferings. For to save them from this He endured His Passion. See, then, what a delightful feast is set before you; if you wish to enjoy its sweetness, dwell on these things diligently and often.

CHAPTER VII

On the Birth of Jesus Christ, etc.

THE term of nine months being then ended, a decree went forth from the Emperor, that all the world should be taxed, each in his own city. Then Joseph, purposing to go into his own city, Bethlehem, and knowing that the time of his wife's delivery was at hand, took her with him. Here, again, the Virgin undertakes a long journey, for Bethlehem is but five or six miles distant from Jerusalem. They took with them, tradition says, an ox and an ass, and travelled as poor cattle-dealers. And when they reached Bethlehem, because they were poor, and the place was crowded by those who had come for the same purpose, "there was no room for them in the inn." Here compassionate the Virgin and regard her, young and delicate, as one at the age of fifteen would be, fatigued with the long journey, abashed in the midst of the crowd, and in vain seeking a shelter; and being everywhere roughly rejected, she and her husband obliged to take refuge in a sort of wayside shed, the mere shelter of persons who are overtaken by the rain. There we may suppose that Joseph, who was by trade a carpenter, might perhaps have constructed a kind of enclosure. But now most carefully attend to all I am about to relate, for these things are reported to have been revealed by the Virgin herself to a certain holy man, and one, I think, worthy of credit of our order, who told them to me.

When the hour of her delivery had arrived, on Sunday at midnight, the Virgin, rising from her seat, rested herself against a pillar which was there; Joseph sat, perhaps grieving that it was not in his power to provide what was fitting for such a time. Then he arose and took some hay out of the manger and laid it at the feet of the Virgin, and thereupon withdrew himself to another part. Then the Son of the Eternal God was born, without pain or hurt to His mother, having passed from her in an instant to the bed of hay,

prepared for Him at her feet. His mother quickly stooped down and took Him into her arms, and sweetly embracing Him, laid Him on her lap; then, through the suggestion of the Holy Spirit, she began to wash and bathe Him, and her breasts were distended through the blessing of heaven; after this, she perhaps wrapt Him in her veil, and placed Him in the manger. And now the ox and ass, with bended knees, and with their heads placed over the manger, breathed upon Him, as if they were gifted with reason, and knew that their warm breath would be of service to an infant so slightly protected from the severity of the season. But His mother, kneeling down, adored, and gave thanks to God, saying, “I thank thee, Lord, Holy Father, for that Thou hast given to me Thy Son, and I adore Thee, Eternal God, and Thee—the Son of the Living God, and mine.” And Joseph likewise adored Him; and taking the ass’s saddle, he drew, we may imagine, away from it the pillion of wool or leather, and placed it by the manger, that the Virgin might sit upon it. But she, seating herself there, used it for a support; and so remained that mother, who is blessed above all, gazing on the manger, having as it were no thought or love for any but for her dearest Son. Thus far we have been following the account of this revelation. After the Blessed Virgin departed, an angel is said to have lingered behind, in order to speak words in her praise, which I could neither understand nor repeat.

You have seen, then, the birth “of the Highest,” you have also contemplated the delivery of the blessed mother, and you must have observed how conspicuous in both was their extreme poverty—how even necessities were wanting to them. This exalted virtue the Lord first brought into prominence. This is that pearl in the Gospel, to purchase which all was sold. This is the first foundation of the whole spiritual house; for with a load of temporal goods, the spirit cannot ascend up to God. Of this S. Francis said, “Learn, brethren, that poverty is the spiritual way of salvation; the nourishment of lowliness, and the root of perfection, the fruit of which is manifold yet hidden. Therefore it is a great shame to us that we do not embrace it with all our strength, but instead thereof we burden ourselves with unnecessary things, when the Lord of the whole world and His mother most strictly and most studiously observed it.” Concerning which S. Bernard thus says, “On earth this virtue abounds, and man knows not the price thereof. This, the Son of God, desiring, came down from heaven, to choose for Himself, and to teach us how precious it is in His estimation.

Adorn thy heart as a chamber for the Spouse, with lowliness and poverty. In these swaddling clothes He delights, as His mother testifies; in these He wills to be wrapt as though they were silks. Sacrifice the abominations of the Egyptians to thy God.” Thus far S. Bernard. The same writer, in a sermon on the Nativity, thus begins: “Blessed be our God and Father. At length He consoles His people. Would you know who ‘His people’ are? The man after God’s own heart tells us ‘the poor committed himself to Thee.’ And Christ, in the Gospel, says, ‘Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have your consolation.’ But what can yet console those who already have their consolation? The infancy of Christ affords no consolation to the talkative; the tears of Christ are no comfort to gigglers, the swaddling clothes are no consolation to the gaudy; the stable and manger are no comfort to those who love the first seats in the synagogue. To the poor shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks, the joyful light was first announced, and unto them the Saviour was born; to the poor, to labouring men, and not to you rich, who have already your consolation and your possessions.” Thus far S. Bernard.

Moreover, in this mystery of the Nativity we can contemplate the profound humility of the Son of God and of His mother. They did not disdain a stable for their dwelling, nor the cattle, hay, and other mean things which were around them. This virtue, in all its acts, both our Lord and His mother most perfectly observed, and thereby commended it to us. Let us strive, then, to do all in our power to embrace it; for without it there is no salvation, because whatever we do when it is mixed with pride cannot please God. According to S. Augustine, pride turned Angels into devils; humility turns men into Angels. And S. Bernard says, “What kind of man ought he, think you, to be, who is chosen to fill the place of a lost Angel? Pride once disturbed that kingdom, shook its walls, partly threw them down, and no small part of them too. What then follows? Would not that pest be abominated by the inhabitants most of all? Be assured, brethren, that He who spared not the proud Angels will not spare men. God will not be inconsistent with Himself.”

Then you can consider in the Son of God and His mother, but mostly in the infant Jesus, the heartrending sufferings of this Mystery. Of this S. Bernard speaks thus: “The Son of God at His Birth, when He had the power to choose whatever time He liked, chose that which was most painful,

especially to a tender infant, the son of a poor mother, who had scarcely any clothes to cover Him, and nothing but a manger in which to cradle Him; and notwithstanding there was such urgent need for them, we hear nothing of warm furs in which to wrap Him.” And again, “Christ, who cannot make a mistake, chose what was most painful to the flesh. This, therefore, is best, and most profitable, and to be preferred; and whoever teaches or advises the contrary, is to be avoided as a seducer.” And again, “He,” brethren, “was foretold a long time before by the prophet Isaiah as the child ‘who should know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.’ Therefore what is pleasant to the flesh is evil, what is painful is good; since that wise child, the infant Word, chose the latter, and rejected the former.” Thus S. Bernard speaks. Go and do thou likewise; but act discreetly, and not exceed your power. We shall have more to say about these virtues in another place. Let us return to the scene of the Nativity.

The Lord then being born, a multitude of Angels came to worship Him, and, having adored their God, forthwith went to the shepherds, who were about a mile from Bethlehem, to announce to them the Birth of Christ and where it took place. Thence, they went up to heaven with songs and joyous strains, announcing to their fellow-citizens the same event. Then the whole heavenly court, in raptures of joy, celebrated the mystery with pomp and praise, making acts of thanksgiving to the Eternal Father; and all who were there, according to their different orders, descend successively to see the Face of the Lord their God; and adoring Him with all reverence, and beholding His mother, they filled the air with songs of praise. For who of them, having heard these tidings, could have remained in Heaven, and not visited his Lord in His so lowly estate upon earth? This proud feeling could not have possessed one of them. And, therefore, the Apostle says, “Again, when He bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him.” Whatever be the truth in this matter, it is sweet to me to meditate thus on the Angels.

The shepherds came and worshipped Him, bringing tidings of what they had heard from the Angels. His most prudent mother was all the while keeping in her heart whatever she heard concerning her Child; and the shepherds departed, rejoicing on their way. Bend thy knee too, you who have lingered before this scene, worship thy Lord God, and reverence His mother, and the holy and venerable Joseph. Then kiss in spirit the Feet of

the Child Jesus, as He lies on His bed of hay, and ask in spirit His mother to hold Him forth that you may receive Him into your arms; then take Him, embrace Him, attentively regard His features, kiss Him reverently, and delight in Him trustfully. This you may do, because He came into the world to save sinners, and after humbly conversing with them, left Himself to them for their food. Therefore His Benignity will patiently suffer Himself to be handled as you desire, and He will not ascribe it to presumption, but to love. Yet these acts must always be accompanied with reverence and fear, because He is the Holy of Holies. Then imagine that you restore Him to His mother, and carefully observe with what care and wisdom she takes charge of Him, gives Him suck, and performs other parental duties. Be ready to give your services as if you could, meditate on them, delight and rejoice in them, and with continual devotion take the posture of one who would gladly, with the Blessed Mother, minister to the Child Jesus, and often gaze upon that Face which angels desire to look upon. But always, as I repeat, with reverence and fear, that you may not suffer a repulse; for you ought to regard yourself as unworthy to converse with Him.

You ought also to contemplate with joy, how great is this day's solemnity. For to-day Christ was born, and, therefore, it is truly the Birthday of the Eternal King and of the Son of the Living God. This day "unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." This day the Sun of Righteousness, which was before under a cloud, shone forth brightly. This day the Holy Spirit, Head of the Church of the elect people, came forth as a bridegroom out of His chamber. This day He who is fairer than the sons of men, showed His face, so long desired. This day first was made that angelic hymn, "Glory to God in the highest." This day peace was announced to men, according to the same hymn. This day, as the Church throughout the whole world sings, "the heavens distilled honey, and the angels sang on earth." This day the kindness and goodness of God our Saviour first appeared. This day God is adored in the likeness of sinful flesh. This day these two miracles happened which surpass all understanding, and which can be apprehended only by faith; namely, God is born, and a Virgin brings forth. This day a multitude of other miracles took place. In short, all that has been written about the Incarnation shone brightly forth; and whatever was before commenced, was only now manifested, and therefore it is permissible to add to these meditations, passages which do not coincide in point of time and yet bear

upon the subject. It is evident, then, that this day is one of public rejoicing and gladness, and of great delight.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the Circumcision, and Weeping of the Lord

THE Child was circumcised on the eighth day. Two great mysteries were wrought on that day. One was the revelation of the Name of salvation, which had been given Him from all eternity, and by which the angel had said He should be called, before He was conceived in the womb—that Name this day was declared and made known. And they called His name Jesus; but Jesus means Saviour, “which Name is above every name.” Nor is there, as the Apostle Peter saith, any “other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” The other is, that on this day it came to pass that the Lord Jesus began to shed His most sacred blood for us. Early in life did He begin to suffer for us; He who did no sin, for us to-day began to bear the penalty of sin. Call out compassion for Him, and weep with Him, for to-day He wept much. In these solemnities we have indeed great cause to rejoice at our salvation; yet we ought also to have a tender sorrow and pity on account of His anguish and sufferings. You have heard what affliction and poverty He endured at His Birth; and besides what has been mentioned, tradition says that when His mother laid Him in the manger she had nothing but a stone on which to raise His head, putting perhaps a little of the hay upon it. I had this from a devout brother who is said to have seen it, and to this day the stone appears in the wall as a memorial of this event. You can conceive with what delight that Blessed Mother would have placed a soft cushion under His head, had she one; but having nothing but a stone, with bitter grief she laid His head upon it.

And on this day you hear how He shed His Blood; for His Flesh was cut with the stony knife. Ought we not, then, to be moved with compassion for

Him? Yes; and assuredly for His mother too. The child Jesus cried most piteously at the sharp pain He endured in His Flesh; for His Flesh was as real and capable of suffering as that of other infants. But when He wept, think you that His mother's eyes were dry? She wept, indeed, too, on seeing Him weep as He lay upon her lap; and we may depict Him lovingly laying His hand upon her lips and face, as if imploring her not to weep, for He loved her so tenderly that He would fain dry up her tears. Similarly His mother, deeply moved at the sight of the tears of her Son, comforted Him with signs and words; for she, as a most wise mother, was able to comprehend the unspoken desires of her Son. We might imagine her saying, "My Son, if you would have me cease from weeping, cease from it yourself. For how can I but weep, if You weep?" And then out of pity for His mother, her Son may have restrained His sobs. Then His mother wiped away His tears, and pressed her face to His, and gave Him suck, and in every way, as far as she could, comforted Him. And thus she quieted Him whenever He began to cry again, which haply after the manner of infants He did, to show the misery of human nature which He had truly assumed, and to conceal Himself, that the devil might not know Him. For concerning Him the Church thus sings:—

"Bitter the tears the Infant shed
Laid, straiten'd in the manger-bed."

On this day the circumcision of the flesh ceases; and we now have Baptism instead of it—a rite of greater grace and less pain. But still we ought to have the circumcision of the spirit, which consists in divesting ourselves of all that is superfluous, and which therefore commends poverty; for he alone is truly circumcised in spirit who is truly poor. This doctrine, according to S. Bernard, the Apostle delivers in few words, when he says, "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." Spiritual circumcision ought also to extend to all the senses of the body, so that we should exercise self-restraint in seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, but, most of all, in speaking.

Talkativeness is one of the worst vices, odious to God and man, and injurious. We ought then to be circumcised in tongue; that is, speak but little, and to edification. It is a sign of levity to speak much; therefore, on the contrary, silence is a virtue, and not without cause is ordered in Religious rules. S. Gregory speaks thus on this subject: "He truly knows

how to speak, who has first learnt well how to be silent; for the observance of silence is as it were the proper nutriment of speech.” Again, in another place he says: “Those who are of a weak character, are rashly forward in speaking; for what a light fancy conceives, a lighter tongue gives out.” S. Bernard also says thus in a sermon on the Epiphany, which begins with the words—“In the works of the Lord.” “Who knows not how much we are defiled by vain speaking, by lies, by flatteries, by words of malice or boastfulness? For all this we have need of the fifth waterpot, viz. silence, the sentinel of religion, in which lies our strength.” And again, in another place the same Saint says: “Idleness is the mother of frivolity, but the step-mother to virtues. Frivolous talk in the mouths of lay people become almost blasphemous in the mouths of Priests. Such jokes may sometimes be taken, but they should not be brought up again. Thou hast consecrated thy mouth for the Gospel; open it not for unseemly jokes.”

CHAPTER IX

Concerning the Epiphany, or Manifestation of our Lord

ON the twelfth day after the Nativity, the Child Jesus manifested Himself to the Gentiles; that is, to the Magi, or “wise men,” who were Gentiles. Be present, then, on this memorable day; for you will hardly find any other Festival so solemnly kept by the Church, with so great a variety of Antiphons, Responsories, and Lessons, and whatever else contributes to the celebration of a Festival. Not that it is really greater than all other Festivals, but only that on this day things, many and great, were done through the Lord Jesus, and mostly concerning the Church herself.

First, on this day, the Church which is gathered from the Gentiles was received by Christ, for it was represented by the “wise men.” On His Birthday Christ manifested Himself to the Jews, in the person of the shepherds;—the Jews, who, with a few exceptions, did not receive the Word of God. To-day, indeed, He manifested Himself to the Gentiles, who now form the Church of God’s chosen people. Therefore this is probably the Festival of the Church herself and of faithful Christians.

Secondly, on this day, nine-and-twenty years after His Birth, the Church was espoused by and united to Him through His Baptism. And therefore on this day is joyfully sung, “This day the Church is joined to her heavenly Spouse.” For in our baptism our souls are espoused to Christ, who stored up grace for us in His Baptism, and the congregation of the faithful is called the Church.

Thirdly, on this day, a year after His Baptism, He wrought His first miracle at the wedding feast, which may also be taken as an image of the union between Himself and His Church. It may have been also on this day

that He multiplied the loaves and fishes. But the three first of these events the Church commemorates on this day, and not the last. See, then, how worthy of veneration this day is, upon which the Lord chose to work such great wonders. The Church, therefore, in consideration of the many benefits shown to her by her Spouse to-day, and desirous to manifest her gratitude for them, exalts, rejoices, and sings, and solemnizes the day with splendour.

Let us speak now only of the first of these events, as the others will be treated in the order in which they come in the Life of Christ. And even of the first, that is, the coming of the Magi to Christ, it is not my intention to enter upon those moral and learned expositions which by holy men have been so amply given. For how the Magi came from the East to Jerusalem, what passed between them and Herod, how the star led them, why they made that particular offering, and other things of the same kind, you will find in the text of the Gospel and the commentaries of holy men. For, as I said in the beginning, I in this and in other actions of the Life of Christ, aim at depicting a few of the scenes respecting what Christ really did, or what may be conceived as likely to have happened, and dwelling upon these from different points of view. But I purpose having as little as possible to do with the work of an expositor; both because I am incapable of it, and because it would make my work of too great length. Try, therefore, in spirit to be present now, and contemplate diligently everything that happens; because, as I have before said, in this lies the whole force of these meditations.

These three kings, then, came to Bethlehem, with a great crowd of people, and with an honourable suite, and stopped at the hovel where the Lord Jesus was born. The Blessed Virgin, hearing the noise and tumult, caught up her Child. The wise men entered the little dwelling and fell down on their knees, and worshipped the Divine Child reverently. They honour Him as King, and they worship Him as their Lord. See how great was their faith: for what was it to believe, that a little infant, so poorly clad, in the arms of so poor a mother and in such a wretched abode, without attendants, company, or any signs of state, could be their King, and very God? And yet they believed both. Such were thought fit to be our guides and pioneers in the way of faith. See how they remain on their knees before Him! And now they converse with His mother, either through an interpreter or of themselves, for as they were wise men, perhaps they knew the Hebrew language! They questioned her concerning all things which related to the

Child. The Virgin mother replies to their inquiries, and they believe all she tells them. Regard them carefully; how reverently and courtly they speak and listen. See also the Blessed Virgin, how she shrinks from their questions, and, with eyes fixed on the ground, bashfully answers—desires neither to speak nor to be seen. Yet the Lord gave her strength to deport herself fitly on this great occasion, for these worshippers represented the whole Gentile Church of the future. Then consider the Child Jesus; He does not yet speak, yet there is an air of gravity in His manner beyond His age, and as one intelligent, regards them blandly. They are much delighted with the Child, as they, inwardly taught and illumined by Him, regard Him with the eyes of their mind, and with the bodily eye see Him who was fairer than the sons of men. At length, full of joy and consolation, they open their treasures, and having spread a carpet at the Feet of the Lord Jesus, they offer Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh, all of them in the greatest abundance, but more especially the gold. For had their offerings been small and of little value, they would not have “opened their treasures,” because things of small value they would have entrusted to their attendants. And then perhaps they reverently and devoutly kiss His feet. Perhaps the Infant, in His great wisdom, that He might the more comfort them, and increase their love for Him, stretched out His hand for them to kiss, and therewith blessed them. Then they bowed themselves once more, took their leave, and with great joy departed, returning to their own country by another road.

But what, think you, was done with this gold, which was of so great value? Did the Blessed Virgin receive it for her use, or hoard it up? Did she purchase with it houses, lands, or a vineyard? Far otherwise; she was too great a lover of poverty for that. The Virgin mother, in her great zeal for poverty, and knowing her Son’s will by an inward manifestation as well as by outward signs—for we can imagine Him turning away His face from the gold, as if despising it—gave all of it away to the poor in a few days. For to keep or carry such a sum was a burden to her. Whence it happened that when she came into the Temple she had not enough to buy a lamb as an offering for her Son, and therefore she presented only doves and pigeons, for all the money was gone. Therefore it is pious to believe that the offering of the Magi was of great value, and that the Blessed Virgin, having a zeal for poverty and being full of charity, gave it to the poor.

You have here, then, a commendation of poverty, and on these two points dwell. First, the Child Jesus and His mother received alms as needy persons; secondly, they had no mind to acquire or hoard up riches, but, on the contrary, did not even retain what was given to them, as the desire and love for poverty increased in them daily.

But have you not yet taken notice of the humility which is also here conspicuous? Surely, if you consider it, a depth of humility may be discerned in all this. There are many who are mean in their own sight, and not lifted up by the opinion of others; yet are they not willing to be thus regarded by others, nor patient under contempt or derision; neither can they bear to have their faults or the meanness of their condition exposed, lest they should be brought into contempt. Not thus acts to-day the Lord Jesus—the Lord of all; for He desired that His poor estate should be made public before all, not to the few and the despised, but before the great and the many, before kings and all their grand retinue. And this, too, on an occasion and at a time when there was plenty of reason for alarm as to the result. For when these kings came in search of the King of the Jews, whom they likewise believed to be God, finding Him in such an abject condition, they might have thought that they were deluded and imposed upon, and have returned to their homes without faith and devotion. But this lover of humility was not deterred from giving us this example, lest for some specious reason which had the appearance of goodness, we might be led to set aside lowliness, and that we might learn from Him to be willing to appear vile in the eyes of others, and of no account.

CHAPTER X

Of the Delay of the Blessed Virgin at the Manger

WHEN the wise men had been dismissed, and had left for their own country, and their offerings had been disposed of, the mother and the Child Jesus, and the venerable foster-father, still remained at the manger, waiting in that confined place patiently till the fortieth day, as if she had been an ordinary mother, and the boy Jesus had not been different from any other, and needed to observe the law.

And because they did not wish to be singular or to claim a dispensation, they submitted to the law as others did. How many act in an opposite way, who, although they have nothing to distinguish them from every one else, claim for themselves special privileges, and love to have them, that they may be regarded with some peculiar honour; but true humility will not admit of such conduct as this. Therefore the Blessed Mother, after the manner of others, awaited the appointed day for her Purification, when she should enter into the Temple. She remained vigilant, and giving her whole attention to her dear Son. O God! with what solicitude and carefulness did she tend Him, lest any, the least, injury should affect Him! With what reverence, caution, and timorous care did she handle Him, Whom she knew to be her God and her Lord, falling on her knees when she took Him from the manger, or placed Him in it! With what pleasure, confidence, and maternal dignity did she embrace Him, kiss Him, sweetly press Him, and delight in Him whom she knew to be her Son! How often did she regard Him with a curious gaze—His face, and then the different members of His most sacred Body! How gravely and carefully she used to bind His tender limbs! For as she was most humble, so was she most prudent. Wherefore, in

all the offices and services she rendered Him, she exercised the greatest care, both when He was alive or asleep, when He was an infant and as He grew up. O how joyously did she suckle Him! It cannot be supposed that she felt no more pleasure than an ordinary mother, when she gave Him her breast. And S. Bernard would have us believe, that S. Joseph used often to take the Child Jesus on his knees, lovingly smiling at Him.

Let us, then, remain with the Blessed Virgin at the manger, and delight ourselves again and again with the Child Jesus, for virtue goes out from Him. Every faithful soul, and especially every religious person, ought, from Christmas Day to the Purification, at least once a day to visit in spirit that manger in company with the Blessed Mother, to adore the Child Jesus, and meditate affectionately on the poverty, humility, and goodness both of Jesus and of her.

CHAPTER XI

Concerning the Purification of the Blessed Virgin

THE fortieth day having arrived, as prescribed by the law, the Blessed Mother, with the Child Jesus and St. Joseph, went from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, a distance of five or six miles, in order to present the Child to the Lord, according to the law. Go thou with them, and in spirit help to carry the Child; be present and regard attentively everything that takes place—every word and act, for it is a mystery of sublime devotion. They bring, then, the Lord of the Temple to the Temple of the Lord. When they entered the Temple court, they bought a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons to offer for Him, the customary offering for the poor. But as they were very poor, it is more likely that the pigeons were their only offering, being of less price than the doves, and therefore mentioned last in the law, and the Evangelist makes no mention of the lamb, which was the offering of the rich. And behold, just Simeon came into the Temple by the Spirit, that, according to a promise he had received, he might see the Lord's Christ. Wherefore he came with haste into the Temple to see Him, and he knew Him by the spirit of prophecy which was in Him, and at once fell down before Him, and adored Him in His mother's arms. The Infant it may be blessed him, and made gestures, implying that He desired to go to him; which, when His mother knew, though full of wonder, she delivered Him to Simeon. But he joyfully and reverently took Him up in his arms, and arose and blessed God, saying, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace," etc. He also prophesied concerning His Passion. And Anna, a prophetess, likewise came in at that instant, and, worshipping Him, spoke many things of Him. But Mary, wondering at these things, hid them all in

her heart. Then the Child Jesus, stretching forth His hands, returned to His mother. After this, they go to the altar, making a procession, a commemoration of which is made in the Church on this day throughout the world. Those two, venerable old men, Joseph and Simeon, led the way, hand in hand, singing, in a transport of joy, the Psalms, “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is gracious, and His mercy endureth for ever. The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. For this God is our God for ever and ever. We wait for Thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of Thy Temple.” They were followed by the royal mother, bearing Jesus in her arms, Anna accompanying her by her side—she filled with reverent joy, and pouring forth praises to the Lord beyond expression. Here the procession ended; but few formed it, but those few embrace all, for human life in all its phases is represented by them. Here are male and female, old men and young, virgins and widows. And when they had reached the altar, the mother knelt reverently, and offered her dearest Son to His Father, saying, “Receive, O most glorious Father, Thy only-begotten Son, Whom, according to the commandment of Thy law, I offer to You, because He is the first-born of His mother. But I beseech Thee, O Father, to restore Him to me again.” Then rising, she laid Him upon the altar.

O God! what an offering is this; never had such been made from the beginning of time, nor ever shall be again. Consider every circumstance carefully. The Boy Jesus is placed upon and remains on the altar, as any other little child, and regards His mother and those around Him with a steady gaze, humbly and patiently awaiting what further had to be done. The priests are then introduced into the Temple, and the Lord of all things is redeemed like a slave for five shekels—the usual sum, the shekel being a small coin. When Joseph had paid this to the priest, the mother joyfully received back her Son. Then Joseph gave her the aforesaid birds, that she might present them; and she, kneeling down, and holding them in her hands, raised her eyes towards heaven and offered them, saying, “Receive, O most merciful Father, this oblation, this small gift, the first which Thy Child to-day presents unto Thee, of His extreme poverty.” Then the Child Jesus we may think of as stretching forth His hands towards the birds, and raising His eyes towards heaven; and though He did not speak, yet by His gestures seeming to unite with His mother in offering them, and so they placed them on the altar.

You have seen, then, the dignity of those who make this offering, namely, the mother and the Son. Could, then, such an offering, although small, be rejected? God forbid; but rather may we imagine that it was borne up to the highest heaven by the hands of angels, and there presented, and graciously accepted, amid the joyful acclamations of the Heavenly Court.

After this, the holy Virgin departed from Jerusalem, and paid a visit at the house of Elizabeth, as she desired to see John before she left those parts. Go again in spirit with her, and assist her in carrying the Blessed Child. When she had come to the house of Elizabeth, they had great joy in meeting each other, and especially in beholding the boys. And the children rejoiced together; and John, as if conscious of the dignity of Jesus, behaved with becoming reverence. You, too, receive John with respect (for he is great in the sight of the Lord), that you may perchance gain some blessing. And when they had remained some days, they departed, and journeyed towards Nazareth. And here, would you learn from all that has been said, the lesson of lowliness and poverty, you can easily do so by dwelling upon the offering, the redemption of the Child, and this strict observance of the laws.

CHAPTER XII

Of our Lord's Flight into Egypt

AS they were pursuing their journey towards Nazareth, not as yet knowing the Divine counsels, and that Herod was planning the death of the Child Jesus, the Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, and bade him flee into Egypt with the Child and His mother, because Herod sought to take away the Child's life. And Joseph arose from sleep and awoke the Blessed Mother, and told her of the dream. She arose with haste, and proposed starting off at once, for her inmost soul was stirred by the Angel's warning, and she would neglect nothing that might contribute to the safety of her Son. Accordingly that very night they set out towards Egypt. Observe them, and follow them in meditation; picture them taking up the Child Jesus, still asleep; feel for them, and watch intently all that passes, for there is much that is worthy of deep consideration.

And first, reflect on the vicissitudes of prosperity and adversity which our Lord experienced in His own person. And when the like changes happen to you, be patient; for every mountain has a valley near it. For behold at His Birth Christ was glorified by the shepherds as God; and then a very little while after His Birth, He was circumcised, as if a sinner. Then came the wise men and honoured Him greatly—He all the while remaining in a stable amongst cattle, and crying like the child of any poor man. Next we find Him presented in the Temple and extolled by Simeon and Anna, and then He is bidden by the angel to flee into Egypt. You may discover in His Life many instances of a similar alternation, which, with a little adaptation, may provide us with instruction. When, therefore, you are receiving comfort, look out for affliction; and when afflicted, expect comfort. We ought not, then, to be elated by the one, nor depressed by the other. For the Lord sprinkles our sorrows with consolations, to sustain hope, lest we

should be over-borne; and He sends afflictions to keep us humble, that, being reminded of our misery, we might always stand in fear. Let us consider how all these things were done by our Lord for our instruction, and that Satan might not recognize Him.

In the second place, with regard to Divine benefits and consolations, observe, that he who experiences them ought not to set himself up against him who does not experience them; and he who does not experience them, ought not to yield to dejection, nor yet to envy. I ask you to notice, that the angel held converse with Joseph, and not with the Blessed Mother, although she was so much the greater of the two. Further, when we see that Joseph, so great in the sight of God, was vouchsafed an angelic visit, not openly, but in a dream, ought we to be ungrateful and murmur when we are favoured with the gifts of God, although it may be they are not bestowed in the way we would have them?

Thirdly, consider how the Lord permits His people to be troubled by persecutions and tribulations. For great, indeed, must have been the trial to the Blessed Mother and to Joseph, to find that they sought to take away the Child's life. What news could be more painful? It was, I repeat, a great trial to them; for although they knew that He was the Son of God, yet their natural feelings could not but be disturbed, and prompt them to cry out, "O Lord God Almighty, why is it necessary that Thy Son should thus flee into Egypt? Art Thou not able to defend Him here?" Moreover, there was additional trial in this, that they were obliged to take refuge in a distant and unknown country, to travel on rough roads, when unfit to bear fatigue; the Blessed Virgin, because of her youth, and Joseph, on account of his age. The Child also Himself whom they carried was hardly two months old; and they had to dwell in a strange land in a state of extreme poverty. All these things form a very real trial. You, then, when you are tried, have patience, and do not expect to be exempt from trials, from which neither Christ Himself nor His mother were dispensed.

Fourthly, consider His benignity. See how soon and how patiently He suffers persecution, and banishment from His native country, and so meekly yields to the fury of the oppressor rather than destroy him in a moment. Profound indeed is this humility, and great this patience! He will not retaliate, or attempt to injure His enemy, but avoids his snares by withdrawing from him. We should act in the same way towards such as

abuse us, despitefully use us and persecute us. Instead of seeking to revenge ourselves upon them, let us assume the attitude of patience, avoid their fury, and what is more, pray for them, as our Lord teaches elsewhere in the Gospel. The Lord, then, fled from the face of His slave, or, to speak more truly, the Devil's slave. His mother, so tender and young, and S. Joseph, so advanced in years, carried the Divine Child through a wild, dark, woody, uneven, lonely, tedious road; a journey which would be twelve or fifteen days' post for a courier to accomplish, but which they would require two months or more to perform. For they travelled, tradition says, through that desert through which the children of Israel passed, and in which they wandered forty years. But how could they carry provisions with them? Where, too, and in what way, could they find rest at night and shelter? For there are very few houses to be found in that desert. Feel pity for them, then, for this journey must have been painful, toilsome, and long, both to themselves and to the Child Jesus; go in spirit with them, and help them to carry the Child, and desire to minister to them in whatever way may be in your power. It ought not to seem a hardship to bear some affliction for ourselves, when so much has been borne for us by others—and by what others!—and so often. But concerning what happened in the desert and on the way, I will not dwell, because few of those details are well authenticated. When they entered into Egypt, all the idols of that country are said to have fallen in pieces, as Isaiah had prophesied. They journeyed, it is said, as far as Heliopolis, and there renting a little house, they dwelt for seven years, as strangers and foreigners, in a poor and needy condition.

And here there is scope for many beautiful, pious, and tender reflections. Consider attentively what follows. Whence, and in what manner, did they gain their livelihood for so long a time? Did they do nothing but beg? It is said that the Virgin gained what was necessary for herself and Son by her distaff and needle, by sewing and weaving; and thus this queenly mother and lover of poverty passed her time. Much indeed in every way did they love poverty, and preserved their affection for it unimpaired even to the end of their lives. Perhaps she went from house to house asking for work; for how should it become known in the neighbourhood that she wanted employment, unless she herself made it known, for the women who had work to be done could not have divined her wish to undertake it? And when Jesus began to be about five years of age, might He not have carried

messages for His mother, and gone about in quest of work for her, for she could have had no one else to go on errands? And again, might He not have taken back the work when done, and waited for part of the money to be paid? How would they both blush, the Child Jesus, the Son of the most High God, in being sent, and the mother in sending Him! But what if, sometimes when He had given up the work, and asked for payment, some proud, contentious, and abusive woman insulted Him, taking from His hands His mother's labours, and then driving Him without payment from the doors, so that He arrived home empty-handed? How many and how great insults are offered to poor strangers, all of which the Lord came on earth, not to avoid, but to undergo! What if sometimes He returned home hungry, as children become, and asked for bread which His mother was unable to give Him? What must have been the anguish of her soul on these and similar occasions! She would comfort her Son with tender words, and labour to gain food for Him, and perchance sometimes secretly withdraw a little from her own share, to reserve it for Him. These and similar incidents in the infancy of Jesus you may meditate upon, as I have suggested. The thoughts which I have given, you should extend and work out, becoming little with the Little One, and not contemning little matters which some may think too puerile for meditation. These little things seem to me capable of helping devotion, increasing love, inflaming fervour, exciting compassion, strengthening purity and simplicity, nourishing solid lowliness and poverty, preserving familiarity with virtues, leading us to imitate them, and of stimulating hope. For we cannot lift ourselves up to the high things of God, but "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." Such subjects of meditation do away with pride, weaken covetousness, and confound curiosity. Do you see, then, how much good may be derived from these considerations? Become, as I have already said, little with the Little One, and grow with His growth, but always without prejudice to humility; go after Him whithersoever He goes, and live ever in His Presence.

But have you yet realized how laborious their poverty must have been, how great their bashfulness? And if they were obliged to seek food by manual labour, what shall we say of clothing? What, too, about furniture—for instance, beds, and other household conveniences? Think you that they had two of anything, or anything superfluous, or anything only for

ornament? No; such things are contrary to poverty, and although the Blessed Virgin might have had them, as a lover of poverty, she would not. Or again, do you imagine, that with her needle, or in other ways, she employed her time in making embroidery which might minister to the love of dress? Far be it from her. Such employments suit those who have time to waste. She was, indeed, in too great necessity to spend time in vanities; neither would she have done so, if her circumstances had been different. For this is a pernicious form of idleness, and especially in these our times. And would you know why? Hear, then. First, because by this the time which was given to be used for the glory of God, is spent upon trifles contrary to that end. For this curious kind of work takes up more time than it is worth, which is itself a considerable evil. Secondly, because it is apt to minister to vanity in those who do it. Oh, how often do they look at it, turn it over in their mind, and reflect how this or that should be, even when their fingers are not at work upon it! And even when they should be occupied with divine things, their mind is running on the beauty of their workmanship, on the satisfaction they feel, and on the renown they will get from it. Thirdly, because these things are an occasion of pride to those for whom they are made, for with such oil the flame of pride is fed. Plain and simple garments foster a spirit of lowliness, the opposite feed pride. Fourthly, because they are the means of withdrawing the soul from God; for, according to S. Gregory, “the more a soul delights in earthly things, the more is it weaned from the love of heavenly.” Fifthly, because of the lust of the eyes, one of the three sources of sin, to which all sins concerning the world are reduced, for such vanities can be of no other use but for the eyes vainly to feed upon. For as often as any one feasts his eyes with such vanities—whether worker, bearer, or wearer—so often does that person offend God. Sixthly, because in many other ways, such things are a snare and cause of falling; for the sight of them may lead to many faults, such as giving a bad example, causing covetousness, envy, criticisms, murmuring, or detraction. Think, therefore, how often God is offended, before this curious piece of workmanship has an end, and that for all these disastrous results, the worker of it is the cause. Were I, then, to ask you to do such things for me, and were you to know that I should certainly be willing to make use of them, you ought not comply, since for no cause should you consent to sin, and in every way you ought to avoid what may offend God. But how much greater is your

offence, if your very motive in this work is mere complacency, a wish rather to please the creature than the Creator? For they do this who wish to be distinguished, but such works are the trappings of the world, and but abominations to God. But I wonder how any one who in purity of conscience wishes to live above the world, should venture to be occupied with these trifles, and should contaminate himself with them. You see what evils flow from these curiosities. There remains, however, one more, and that a worse one, which is that, curiosity is the very opposite of poverty; and besides this, is the mark of a light, trifling, and inconstant mind. I have dilated upon this subject, that you may be put upon your guard. From these vanities, then, flee as from a venomous serpent, neither make them nor wear them. This, however, must not be taken as a condemnation of all beautiful workmanship, and especially does not apply to work which is to be used in Divine worship; but even in that care must be taken, lest there should be some defect either as to the affection, intention, or delight, with which it is done, or as to the eagerness with which it is pursued. Of such ingenious works, S. Bernard thus speaks: "Tell me what good such vanities are to the body, or what benefit are they to the soul. For certainly you will find that such things do not profit men at all. They are but a frivolous, empty, puerile satisfaction; and I know no severer wish for those, who, leaving the peace of a sweet repose, take delight in the restlessness of such vanities, than that they should be condemned to the possession of the things after which they hankered."

But let us return to the Blessed Mother in Egypt, for we have been tempted to make a long digression about this abominable vice of curiosity. Behold her again, occupied with her labours, sewing, knitting, and spinning; and see how humbly, faithfully, and perseveringly she toils, all the while taking the most diligent care of her Son, and of household matters, and also finding opportunities, when possible, for prayer and watching. You, then, with all affection, compassionate her, and consider, that not even did the mother of our Lord obtain the kingdom of Heaven without working for it. Perhaps, it sometimes happened, that some charitable matrons in the neighbourhood, noticing her poverty, sent her a little relief, which she received humbly and with thankfulness. And Joseph, notwithstanding his age, worked a little at his trade as a carpenter. Look, then, which way you will, there is ample material for compassion; pause a little to exercise it;

then, on bended knees, ask for a blessing from the Child Jesus, and in spirit bidding Him, His mother, and S. Joseph adieu with all reverence and tears of pity, depart; not forgetting that they have to remain there as exiles from their country without a cause for seven years, and to earn their bread in a foreign land in the sweat of their brow.

CHAPTER XIII

Of the Return of our Lord from Egypt

FOR full seven years, God is said to have been a stranger in the land of Egypt, when the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Take the young Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel, for they are dead which sought the young Child’s life. And he took the young Child and His mother, and returned into the land of Israel.” On his arrival, he discovered that Archelaus, the son of Herod, reigned there, and he feared to go on. And through a second admonition from the angel, he retired into Galilee, to the city of Nazareth. His return was about the Feast of the Epiphany; according to the Martyrology it was on the second day.

Here again you see, for I have touched on this before, how the Lord gives His consolations and revelations piecemeal, and not all at once according to the fulness of our desires. You may notice this from two circumstances. First, because the revelation came not openly, but in a dream. Secondly, because, not on one occasion but on two, the angel instructed him as to where he was to go. According to an old commentary, God did this, because our certainty is increased by the repetition of the vision. But whether this be so or not, we ought to esteem highly every the least revelation, and be thankful for it, knowing that He always disposes all things in the way He sees to be best for us.

But now let us gather in our thoughts upon the return of our Lord, and give our whole attention to it, for it is a subject most suitable for devout meditation. Return, then, in spirit to Egypt for the sake of visiting the Child Jesus; perhaps you will find Him out-of-doors, in company with other children. Depict Him as a child, running up to you, for He is affable, kindly, and courteous. But you, fall on your knees, and kiss His Feet, and take Him up into your arms, and rest awhile with Him. Perhaps He will say to you,

“We have permission to return to our country, and tomorrow we have to leave this place; you have come at a good time, for you can join us on our homeward journey.” To which quickly respond, that you will be over-joyed to do so, that you wish to follow Him wheresoever He goes, and that your delight is in His society. I have already allowed that such points as these may seem puerile to some, yet frequent meditation upon them will yield much fruit, and prepare the way for higher things. Afterwards, you can imagine that He will lead you to His mother, who will honour you with a courteous reception. Pay her and her holy and aged spouse the attention which is due, and rest with them.

On the following morning, when they are ready to depart, you will see some charitable matrons, and also men, come to accompany them beyond the gates of the city, on account of their peaceful and pious mode of life whilst among them. For it may be they had spoken beforehand to their neighbours of their departure for some days; for it was not fitting that they should leave unexpectedly, and as it were by stealth—a mode of departure which they had adopted when they came into Egypt; but then they had a reason for it, for the life of the Child was in danger. And now they are setting out; Joseph goes before with the men, and the Blessed Virgin follows at some distance with the matrons. Take, then, in spirit the Child by the hand, and go with Him before His mother, for she will not suffer Him out of her sight. When they had passed the gate, Joseph would no longer permit them to accompany him; when perhaps one of them who was rich, taking pity on their poverty, called the Child Jesus to him and gave Him something for their journey. The Child, though ashamed, accepted it; we can imagine Him for the love of poverty holding out His Hand, and bashfully taking the money and returning thanks for it; and then others begin to give Him something also, the matrons calling Him and doing the same. His mother, too, was no less abashed, yet she also humbly acknowledged the gifts. Do you then compassionate them, for He it is whose is “the earth and the fulness thereof,” who made choice of so rigorous a poverty and such narrow circumstances, for Himself, His mother, and His foster-father. How brightly does their poverty shine in all its holiness! How does it draw us to the love and practice of it! At last, having returned thanks to the company, they wish them good-bye, and pursue their journey.

But how will the Child Jesus bear the fatigue of this journey, being yet of tender age? It will be a greater trial than the journey when He came into Egypt. For then He was so little that He was easily carried, but now He is too big to be carried, and too little to walk. It may have been that some good neighbours gave or lent an ass for Him to ride on. O beautiful and delicate Youth, King of Heaven and earth, what labours didst Thou undergo for us, even in Thy earliest years! Well hath the prophet said in Thy person, "I am poor, and in labours from my youth." Great indeed are the privations, incessant the toil, and countless the bodily hardships, Thou didst assume for our sakes! Thou seemest to have hated Thyself out of love for us. Surely this one labour, on which we are now meditating, should have sufficed to redeem us. Take up, then, the Boy Jesus, and in spirit put Him on the ass, conduct Him trustily, and when He wants to dismount, receive Him joyfully into your arms, and hold Him a little while, at least till His mother comes up, who may be imagined to walk a little more slowly and evenly. Then the Child will go to her, and the reception of Him will be to her a great repose. On they go, and through the desert by which they came, they pass; during this journey often excite compassion for them, for they have but little rest. See them, how fatigued they are, and worn out with toil both by day and night. When they reached the confines of the desert, there they may have met John the Baptist, who had already begun to lead a penitential life, though said to be free from sin. It is thought that the place on the banks of Jordan where John baptized, is that over which the children of Israel passed, when they came from Egypt through this very desert; and that night to that place in this desert John did penance. It is quite possible, if this were the case, that the Boy Jesus, when He passed that way on His return, might find him there. Meditate, then, on the joy which would surely accompany such a meeting, and see them remaining for a while with the Baptist, partaking of his rough food, and, after the sweetness of spiritual refreshment, bidding him adieu. And you, at meeting and parting, show respect for the Saint, in spirit embracing his feet, seeking his blessing, and striving to imitate him; for great is that child and very wonderful, even from his cradle. He was the first hermit, the founder and model of all who choose the Religious Life. He was most pure, a very great preacher, more than a prophet, and a glorious martyr. Then the travellers crossed Jordan, and called at the house of Elizabeth, where there was great joy and mutual congratulations. Then it

was that Joseph, on hearing that Archelaus, the son of Herod, reigned in Judæa, was filled with fear; and being warned by an Angel in a dream, withdrew to Galilee, to the city of Nazareth.

Behold, we have brought back the Child Jesus from Egypt, and upon His return, the sisters and other relatives and friends of the Blessed Virgin all ran to visit them. But they remained in Nazareth, and lived a life of poverty. From this time to the twelfth year of His age, nothing is recorded of the Child Jesus. There is a tradition, however, and it is not improbable, that the fountain is still there out of which He used to draw water for His mother. For the lowly Lord, perhaps, did services of this kind for her, for she had no other to serve her. Here, too, you can imagine that S. John the Evangelist came with his mother, she being the Blessed Virgin's sister, and he being about five years old. For it is reported of him that he died sixty-seven years after our Lord's Passion, in the ninety-eighth year of his age; and, therefore, at the time of Christ's Passion, when our Lord was thirty-three or a little more, S. John was thirty-one. S. John, then, would be about five, when our Lord was seven years old on His return from Egypt. Behold, then, the children standing together and conversing, as our Lord may enable you. For this was that disciple whom afterwards Jesus loved, with the love of friendship.

CHAPTER XIV

How the Child Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem

BUT when He was twelve years old, He went up with His parents to Jerusalem, according to the custom and law of the Feast, which lasted eight days. Then, again the Child Jesus performed an arduous and long journey, to honour His Heavenly Father on the Festivals appointed by Him; for there is supreme love between the Father and the Son. But the affliction and bitter sorrow of heart which He felt on account of the dishonour done to His Father by the manifold offences of sinners, far exceeded the joy which the external honour and pomp paid to His Father during the Festival gave Him. Thus, then, the Lord of the Law observed His own law, and humbly took His place among the rest as one of the poorest of His creatures. And when the Feast was ended, His parents returned home, but He remained behind in Jerusalem. Here give your best attention, and be present in spirit, for there is much in this narrative for devout and profitable meditation. I have already said that Nazareth, where our Lord dwelt, is about seventy miles from Jerusalem. When, then, His mother and Joseph, having travelled by different roads, came in the evening to the place where they were to put up for the night, the mother seeing Joseph without her Son, in whose company she expected Him to have journeyed, asks him, "Where is the Child?" And he replies, "I know not. Is He not with you? I expected that He had travelled with you." Then the mother, crushed with bitter grief, with tears cried, "He has not returned with me. I see I have not taken care enough of my Child;" and she rushed out, late as it was, with all the composure she could command, and went from house to house making inquiries about Him, and saying, "Have you seen my Son?" "Have you not seen my Son?" hardly

knowing, so great was her grief and ardent desire, what she said. And Joseph, also in tears, followed her. And what rest, think you, could they find, when they found not Him—and especially His mother, who loved Him so devotedly? For although her friends sought to console her, she could in no wise be comforted. For what was it to lose Jesus? Behold her and condole with her, for her soul is in bitter anguish, for never since she was born did she experience grief like this. Let us not, then, be disturbed when trouble comes, seeing that the Lord did not spare His own mother. As it is His own to whom especially He permits tribulations to come, and they are the signs of His love, it is good for us to have them.

At length, the Blessed Mother shuts herself up in her closet, and turning to prayer and lamentation, thus addresses God: “O God, Eternal Father, most merciful and most benign, it has pleased Thee to entrust to me Thy Son, and alas! I have lost Him, and I know not where He is. Restore Him to me, I pray Thee. O Father, remove this bitter sorrow from me, and show me Thy Son! O Father, look upon the affliction of my heart, and not on my negligence; for I acted incautiously, but I did it in ignorance. But of Thy goodness restore Him to me, for I cannot live without Him. O my dearest Son, where art Thou? What has happened to you? With whom now art Thou dwelling? Hast Thou returned to Thy Father in Heaven? I know that Thou art God, that Thou art the Son of God; but how is it that Thou hast not told me of Thy departure? Or rather, perhaps some one has treacherously waylaid Thee? For I know that as true man Thou wert born of me, and that when sought by Herod I carried Thee into Egypt. May Thy Father guard Thee from all evil, my Son! Tell me, my Son, where Thou art, and I will come to Thee, or do Thou come to me. Spare me this once, for it has never happened before, and I will never neglect Thee again. When did I ever offend Thee, my Son? On what account, then, hast Thou left me? I know that Thou knowest the sorrow of my heart. O my Son, do not delay to return to me. Never, since Thou wert born, have I lived, ate, or slept without Thee till now. But now I am deprived of Thee, not knowing how it has come to pass. Thou knowest that Thou art my hope, my life, and all my good, and that without Thee I cannot live. Disclose to me, then, where Thou art, and how I may be enabled to find Thee.”

With these, and with similar utterances, did the mother, throughout the night, pour forth the anguish of her soul for her beloved Son. Early the next

morning they went forth in pursuit of the Holy Child, through the neighbouring places; for there were many roads from Jerusalem by which He might return, as often between places there are different routes by which you can travel. They spent the next day in other places, seeking for Him amongst their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And after this, not finding Him, His mother's fears and anxiety became intensified, and beyond the reach of all consolation. But on the third day they returned to Jerusalem, where they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors. No sooner did she see her Son, than she was over-joyed, and her life seemed to revive in her, and falling upon her knees, with tears she gave thanks to God. You can conceive how the Child Jesus, seeing His mother, came to her; and she, taking Him in her arms, pressed Him to her, and kissed Him tenderly on His cheeks, and holding Him to her bosom, for a while continued to embrace Him, unable through emotion to express what she felt. Afterwards, regarding Him wistfully, she says, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." Then He replied, "How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" "And they understood not the saying." Then His mother said to Him, "Son, it is my wish that we should return home; will you not go back with us?" And He said, "I will do as you desire," and He returned with them to Nazareth.

You have contemplated the affliction of the mother on this trying occasion. But how did her Son pass those three days? Turn, then, your attention to Him. Imagine Him as a beggar, knocking at some poor man's door and bashfully asking for a night's lodging. See Him enter the house, and partake of the food which was bestowed upon Him—Jesus poor, amongst the poor. Then behold Him sitting in the midst of the doctors, with calm, wise, and reverent look, listening to them, and asking them questions as if needing instruction: which He did out of humility, and also lest He should confound them by His wonderful answers.

But here you may consider, in this occurrence, three important truths. First, he who would cleave to God must not be too much in the company of relations, but must sometimes withdraw from them. For the Child Jesus Christ left even His dearest mother, when He was intent on His Father's business; and afterwards, when they sought Him amongst kinsfolk and acquaintance, they found Him not. Secondly, he who would lead a spiritual

life ought not to be surprised if sometimes he suffers from dryness of spirit, and feels for a while as though he were forsaken by God, since, to our Lord's mother, this happened. Let him not faint under this affliction, but let him diligently seek God in holy meditations and by perseverance in well-doing, and he will find Him again. Thirdly, no one ought to follow his now inclination and will. For, although the Lord Jesus said that it behoved Him to be about His Father's business, He seemed to change His purpose and follow the will of His mother, accompanying her and His foster-father to Nazareth, where He was subject to them. In this also you can admire His lowliness, of which we shall treat more fully presently.

CHAPTER XV

What our Lord did from the Twelfth to the Thirtieth Year of His Age

THE Lord Jesus returned, therefore, from the Temple and from Jerusalem with His parents to the city of Nazareth, and was subject unto them, and dwelt with them from that date to the beginning of His thirtieth year. Nor is there anything in Holy Scripture recorded of His doings during the whole of that time, which is in itself very wonderful. What, then, shall call out our admiration in Him, or what shall we conceive that He did during that period? Did the Lord Jesus remain idle for so long a time, so that nothing was done worthy of record in Scripture? But if He performed actions, why are they not related as His other deeds are? It seems very remarkable. But particularly notice this, that His doing nothing wonderful was itself a wonder. For nothing which concerns His life is devoid of mystery; and, as there was virtue in His actions, so was there in His silence, in His inaction, and in His retirement. Thus this Sovereign Master, who was about to teach all virtues and the path of life, began from His youth to practise virtues, but in a wondrous, hidden, and till then unheard-of way; namely, by making Himself appear in the eyes of men, useless, contemptible, and simple, as we may devoutly conceive, without any risk of presumption. But in these meditations I do not wish to affirm anything which may not be proved by the authority of Holy Scripture, or of the Doctors of the Church, as I said in the beginning.

Christ, then, withdrew Himself from the companionship and conversation of men. He went, we may be sure, to the synagogue, which was then the Church. He stayed a long time there in prayer, having taken the lowest place. Then He would return home and remain with His mother, and

sometimes help His foster-father. He would pass through the crowd, going and returning, as if He did not see any one. All marvelled that so fair a youth should achieve nothing worthy of renown. For they expected that He would do great deeds, and become a noted man. For, while a boy, "He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." But as He grew up, and reached from His twelfth to His thirtieth year, He nevertheless did no work worthy of renown, or which bore the appearance of manly worth, and therefore, being greatly disappointed, they might have laughed at Him, saying, "He is an useless fellow; He is an idiot, nothing of a man, a fool, a stupid creature." Neither did He give Himself to any learning, so that it is said to have been a proverbial remark that He was, though grown, still a child. And He persisted so long in this way of living, and so clung to it, that He was commonly regarded by all as a person of no account, and beneath their notice; which the prophet had well declared long before in his person, "I am a worm, and no man," etc.

You see, then, what Christ did, in doing nothing. He rendered Himself mean and contemptible to all, as I have said. But does this appear of small moment to you? Such a line of conduct was not necessary to Him, but it is to me. Certainly, in all which we do I know nothing which presents greater difficulties. He seems to me to have reached the very highest state, who has advanced so far as to have overcome and brought into subjection his own mind and the proud arrogance of his flesh, choosing not to be considered of any account, but rather to be despised as one insignificant and vile. Greater is this, according to Solomon, than the conquest of cities. "The patient man is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." Until you reach this point, do not think that you have done anything. For, seeing that we are truly unprofitable servants, even when we have done all, according to the words of our Lord; till we attain to this degree of abjection, we do not abide in truth, but in vanity, and walk therein. This also the Apostle plainly declares when he says, "If any man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." If, then, you inquire why the Lord Jesus acted thus, I answer you, that it was not necessary for His own sake, but for our instruction. Therefore, if we do not learn to do the same, we are inexcusable. Abominable indeed is it if the worm, and he who is soon to be the food of worms, exalt himself; when the Lord of Majesty, humbling Himself, descended so low.

But if any one should deem it incredulous that our Lord should have lived so long uselessly, and be rather disposed to attribute deficiency to the narrative of the Evangelists, it can be replied that, to offer practically an example of such great virtue was, far from being useless, a most useful expenditure of time, and the true and stable foundation of all virtues. And from our Lord Himself we have the words recorded, in the Gospel of S. John, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me; and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning" (that is, as preachers). And Peter, at the election of S. Matthias the Apostle, says, "Of these men, which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John," etc. But then Jesus "began to be about thirty years of age." If the Lord Jesus had begun to preach before him, John would not have been His forerunner. And, moreover, if He commenced His ministry sooner, how came it to pass that He was not known to His neighbours after so many years, so that they asked, "Is not this the carpenter's Son?" whilst, after He had but a short time come forth, He was called, even by His companions, the Son of David? If, then, He had commenced His ministry sooner, or had done any remarkable actions, they would have been recorded, or at least some of them, nor would all the Evangelists be wholly silent about them. This also accords with the opinion of S. Bernard, as you will see in the following chapter, and has the support of his authority. But whatever may be the truth on this subject, I cannot but think it affords matter for devout meditation. Thus did the Lord Jesus form the sword of lowliness, by this manner of life, as by the prophet it was said to Him, "Gird Thee with Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most mighty." With no more fitting sword, forsooth, than that of lowliness, did it become Him to slay the proud adversary. For we do not read that He ever employed the sword of His greatness, but rather the contrary one, even at a time when it was most needed—the time of His Passion. The same prophet complains to God the Father in behalf of His Son, saying, "Thou hast taken away the edge of His sword; and givest Him not victory in the battle." You observe, then, how the Lord Jesus "began first to do, then to teach;" for He was soon to say, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." It was this which He first would practise, and that unfeignedly, doing it from the heart, for He

was truly and from the heart lowly and meek. There could be no dissimulation in Him; but He rather abased Himself more and more deeply in lowliness, vileness, and abjection; yea, made Himself of no account in the sight of all men, so that even after that He began to preach and to reveal high and divine truths, and also to do actual miracles and mighty works, they still held Him in no reputation, but vilified and derided Him, saying, “Who is this? Is not this the carpenter’s Son?” and used similar derisive and reproachful expressions. In this sense were indeed verified the words of the Apostle, when he said of our Lord, “He emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant;” and not only of a servant, by His Incarnation, but of a seemingly unprofitable servant by His lowly and abject mode of life.

If, then, you would see how most mightily He girded this sword to Himself, consider His every action, and you will ever find His lowliness shining forth in all He did. You have seen it already; recall, then, what has been said, and impress it on your memory. We have also, in the different stages of Christ’s Life, manifold expressions of this grace, to which He was ever faithful and which He continually manifested, even to the hour of His death, and even after death, nay, even after His Ascension. Did He not wash the disciples’ feet at last? Did He not humble Himself to a point beyond which it is impossible to go, even to the bearing of the Cross? Did He not, after He had entered upon the glory of the Resurrection, call His disciples “brethren”? “Go,” said He to the Magdalene, “and tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father,” etc. Did He not, even after His Ascension, speak humbly to Paul, as if to an equal? “Saul, Saul, why persecutest Thou me?” And did He not, seated on the Throne of His Majesty, represent Himself as about to say, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me?”

Not without cause did our Saviour love this virtue so greatly. He knew that, as pride is the root of all sin, so humility is the foundation of all virtue and of salvation. Without this foundation all building is in vain. Do not, therefore, put trust in virginity or poverty, or in any virtue or work, unless lowliness accompany it. Christ, then, made this virtue, and showed how it was to be acquired; namely, by making Himself to be of no account, and by casting Himself down in His own sight and in the eyes of others, and by the continual performance of lowly actions. Go, then, and do thou likewise, if

you wish to obtain lowliness. For humility must take the lead amongst the virtues; that is, contempt of self, and the practice of menial and lowly works. On this S. Bernard says, "Humility, which results from humiliation, is the foundation of the whole spiritual fabric. Humiliation is as much the way to humility as patience is to peace, or reading to knowledge. If you desire the virtue of lowliness, you must not shun the path of humiliation. For if you cannot bear to be humiliated, you will never advance in lowliness." And again he says, "You must think humbly of yourself, if you are striving for a higher state; lest, when raised above your place, you fall beneath it, because you were not firmly established in a true and solid lowliness. And because, except through the path of lowliness, there is no way of attaining to real greatness; therefore, he who would ascend, must be humiliated by reproof, that he may be exalted by lowliness." Therefore, when you see yourself humbled, take it as a good sign, and as a sure token that grace is at hand. For as the heart is lifted up before destruction, so before exaltation there is lowliness. Truly you have read both that God plainly "resists the proud, and gives grace to the lowly." And a little further on he says, "But it is little to be willing to submit to humiliations which come directly from God, unless we learn to do the same when He sends humiliations through the instrumentality of others. Take a wonderful instance of this in the case of holy David, who, when cursed by a servant, did not allow a movement of anger at so great an injury, because a prior movement of grace animated him. 'What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah?' he exclaimed. O truly a man after God's own heart, who felt more indignant against one who avenges himself, than incensed against one who upbraided him! Wherefore he can say with a secure conscience, 'If I have rendered evil in return for evil,' " etc. For the present what has been said about humility will suffice.

Let us return to the consideration of the actions and life of the Lord Jesus our Mirror, as the principal object of our inquiry. And again imagine yourself to be an eye-witness of all that takes place, as I have before exhorted you. Behold that Family, blessed above all others, small in itself, but great in dignity, living in a poor and humble manner. It was Joseph's delight, as far as age permitted him, to gain what he could at the carpenter's board. The Blessed Virgin laboured at her needle and distaff. She likewise attended to the duties of the house, which, as you know well, are not slight;

she prepared food for her husband and for her Son, and went through the round of domestic labours, doubtless unassisted by any menial. Pity her, then, because she has to labour thus with her hands; pity, also, the Lord Jesus, for He helped her, sharing her labours as far as He could. For He came, as He Himself said, “not to be ministered to, but to minister.” See Him, then, assisting His Blessed mother, arranging the frugal repast, making the bed for the night’s rest, busied with household work. Behold also the three—Himself, His mother, and Joseph—taking their meals together day by day; no dainties or luxuries, but poor and homely fare is to be seen upon the board. Regard also their communications; no vain and idle word is spoken, but their conversation is full of wisdom, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and their mind no less than their body is refreshed. Then, after a little recreation, all retire to prayer, in their separate rooms; for their house would not be spacious, but a little one. Follow them in spirit into their different chambers, and behold the Lord Jesus, after His evening prayer, composing Himself, night after night, it may be, to sleep on the floor, the few hours of the night which remained, so humbly and in such a poor condition, and as one of the lowest of His creatures. Thus ought you, when you are going to bed, nightly to think of Him in this state. O hidden God! why do you thus afflict your innocent and sinless body? To spend the night but once in such a way, ought to suffice to redeem the whole world. Boundless love constrained you to do this; it was because Thou wert very zealous for the lost sheep, eager to bear it upon Thy Shoulders to heavenly pastures. Why shouldst thou, O King of kings, Eternal God, Who suppliedst the needs of all, Who givedst all things abundantly to all, be brought to such a condition as this? Hast Thou reserved for Thyself this extreme poverty, degradation, and hardship, endured for so long a time, amid watching, sleeping, fasting, eating, and all Thy other actions? Where, then, are those who seek bodily ease, and love curious and useless ornaments? Those who act thus have not been trained in Thy school. Are we, then, wiser than the Master? He taught us by word and example, lowliness, poverty, mortification of the body, and a life of toil. Let us, then, follow the Sovereign Master, who neither wills to deceive nor can be deceived. “Having,” in the words of the Apostle, “food and raiment, let us be therewith content,” seeking in those things what is rightly sufficient, and not superfluities. Continue also in the exercise of other virtues, and “give

thyself” to spiritual study, and be most careful to persevere in what you begin.

CHAPTER XVI

Concerning the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ

IMAGINE the Lord Jesus, having completed His twenty-ninth year, having lived in this abject and painful manner all the time, saying to His mother, “The time is come that I should glorify and manifest My Father, and show Myself to the world, and labour for the salvation of souls, for which the Father sent Me forth. Be of good courage, therefore, good mother, for I shall quickly return to you;” and the Master of lowliness, kneeling down, prayed for a blessing on His departure. And she likewise knelt down, and embracing Him with tears, said most tenderly, “My Blessed Son, go, with a Divine blessing, from your home; be mindful of me, and remember that you soon return to me.” Thus, then, did Jesus, having reverently taken leave of His parents, His mother and foster-father Joseph, set out from Nazareth toward Jerusalem, by the way which led to Jordan, where John was baptizing, at a place which was a considerable distance from Jerusalem. And the Lord of all the earth performed the journey alone, for as yet He had no disciples. Gaze upon Him, remembering the Divine Presence; see the solitary wayfarer, barefooted, travel-worn, fatigued by so long a journey, and pity Him from your heart. O Lord, whither goest Thou? Art Thou not, indeed, higher than all the kings of the earth? O Lord, where, then, are your attendants? where are the barons, the counts, the captains, the warriors, the horses, the elephants, the camels, the equipages, the couriers, and all the rest, which should form Thy train? Where is Thy suite, and where are the guards who keep off the populace from approaching too near Thy Sacred Presence, as earthly monarchs are wont to have, and other great personages? Where are the sounds of trumpets, the strains of music, the

royal banners? Where are the forerunners, whose business it is to prepare for the fitting reception and entertainment of princes? Where are all the pomps and honours, which surround us, worms of earth, on such occasions? O Lord, are not the heavens and the earth full of Thy glory; how is it, then, that Thou art become thus inglorious? Art not Thou He to whom “thousand thousands ministered” in Thy kingdom, “and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before” Thee? Why, then, dost Thou thus journey unattended, and barefooted? Ah, yes! I divine the cause: Thou art not now in Thy kingdom; for Thy kingdom is not in this world. Thou hast emptied Thyself, taking the form of a servant, not of a king. Thou art made as one of us, “a stranger and sojourner, as all our fathers were.” Thou art become a servant, that we may become kings. For Thou hast come to conduct us to Thine own kingdom, by laying bare before our eyes the way by which we can ascend thither. Why, then, do we neglect it? Why do we not follow Thee? Why do we not humble ourselves? Wherefore do we pant after and grasp at pomps and honours, vain and transient? Certainly because our kingdom is of this world; nor do we at all regard ourselves as pilgrims here, and therefore we incur all these evils. O vain children of men, why do we prefer the shadow to the substance, the perishing to the solid and lasting, the temporal to the eternal, and eagerly run after it? Surely, O good Lord, if we did but realize the truth, that we are strangers and pilgrims, we should quickly follow Thee, taking of these visible possessions only what is necessary, lest we should be retarded in running after the odour of Thy ointments. For we should be free from every burden, and should, regarding these transitory things as already past, easily despise them. The Lord Jesus, then, thus humbly travels day after day, till He arrives at Jordan. And when He had come thither, He found John there baptizing sinners, and a great crowd of people who had gathered round him to hear his preaching; for they believed him to be the Christ. Then the Lord Jesus said to him, “I ask thee to baptize Me with these.” But John beholding Him, and in spirit recognizing Him, was afraid, and with reverence answered, “Lord, I have need to be baptized of Thee.” To whom the Lord Jesus replied, “Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” Do not reveal this now, nor make Me known, for My time is not yet come; but baptize Me. Now is the time of lowliness, and therefore will I fulfil all lowliness.

Attend also to lowliness yourself, for this is a fitting place to treat of it, and you ought to know, according to the commentary on this passage, that lowliness has three degrees. The first is, to subject ourselves to those who are above us, and not to prefer ourselves to our equals. The second is, to subject ourselves to our equals, and not to prefer ourselves to our inferiors. The third and highest is, to subject ourselves to inferiors, and this is the degree Christ practised on this occasion, and therefore He fulfilled all lowliness.

You see how Christ increased in the exercise of humility. For in the lowliness which we are here considering, He subjected Himself to His own servant, made Himself of no account, and justified and magnified His servant. Now in comparison of that which has gone before, see how His lowliness has advanced. For hitherto, He has conversed humbly with men, as a useless and mean person, but now He would appear also as a sinner. For John preached to sinners the baptism of repentance, and baptized them; and the Lord Jesus, amongst them, and before them all, willed to be baptized. Thus S. Bernard speaks on this matter: “He came amongst the rabble to the baptism of John. He came as one of the people—He Who was alone without sin! Who would ever think that He was the Son of God? Who would ever believe Him to be the Lord of Majesty? Indeed Thou hast greatly humbled Thyself, O Lord; too much dost Thou hide Thyself, yet Thou canst not hide Thyself from John.” And the same may be said of His Circumcision, for there also He willed to appear as a sinner; but here the lowliness is greater, for that was in private, this in public. But was there not a risk in all this, lest, when He was greatly desirous to go forth and preach, He should be spurned as a sinner Himself? Yet, notwithstanding this, He would not give up lowliness, but as the Master of that virtue He would most profoundly abase Himself. He willed even to wear the appearance of what He was not, for the sake of the abjection and contempt which would be thereby brought upon Him, having always in view our instruction: we will, on the contrary, to appear what we are not, for our own praise and glorification. If there is any scrap of goodness, we love to make a display of it; but our defects we conceal, though we are ever so sinful and wicked. Is this our way of being lowly? Hear upon this not me, but S. Bernard, who says, “There is a lowliness which charity quickens and inflames; and there is a lowliness which truth produces in us, yet which has no heat. The one

indeed consists in knowledge, the other in affection. For if you examine yourself by the light of truth, and look steadily and truthfully into yourself, and judge, unbiassed by flattery, I doubt not but that you will be humbled, and will become more vile in your own eyes, from a knowledge of the truth about yourself; although you may not yet, perhaps, bear to be so regarded by others. By this you will be humbled indeed by the force of truth, but not at all as yet by the infusion of charity. For were you as much affected by the love of that truth which so transparently and truthfully showed you to yourself, as you were illuminated by its rays, you would without doubt desire that all should form the same opinion of you, which you know is held by the truth within yourself. I say, however, as far as is expedient, for it is not at all times advisable to make everything known to every one which you know about yourself; for by the charity itself of truth, and by the truth of charity, we are forbidden to make known what may hurt another. But leaving such a case out of the question, if influenced only by personal considerations, you keep pent up within yourself the judgment of truth, what doubt can there be that you love the truth less than you love yourself, since you prefer to it your own interest or honour?" And further he adds "If you are already humbled by that necessary humility, which the truth which searcheth the hearts and veins instils into the senses of the watchful soul, exercise the will, and make a virtue of a necessity, for there is no virtue where there is no consent of the will. If, then, you are unwilling to appear outwardly otherwise than you find yourself inwardly, the will has acted. If not, fear lest it may be said of you, 'He flattereth himself in his own sight until his abominable sin be found out.' 'Divers weights and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the Lord.' What then? Is it that you depreciate yourself when you secretly weigh yourself with the scales of truth, and valuing yourself more highly outwardly, you then sell yourself to us at a higher price than truth itself prescribed. Fear God, and shrink from so base an action, as to extol yourself with the will, at the very time when truth in the understanding abases you. For this is to resist the truth, this is to fight against God. But do you rather agree with God, and submit your will to the truth, not only submit to the truth but love it. 'Shall not,' says the Psalmist, 'my soul be subject to God?' But it is a slight thing to be subject to God, unless you are also subject to all mankind for God's sake, both to those who bear rule, and to those who are set over you by

them. I say more, be subject to equals, be subject also to inferiors, ‘for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.’ Go also to your inferior if you would be perfect in righteousness, defer to him, stoop humbly to those less than yourself.” Thus S. Bernard teaches. He says also, “Who is righteous but the humble? For then, when the Lord stooped to the hands of His servant, the Baptist who trembled because of His Majesty, He said, ‘Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness,’ thus identifying the summit of perfect righteousness with the perfection of lowliness. Therefore the just man is the humble.” Thus far S. Bernard. But this righteousness in the humble appears in this: that he renders to every one his due; he does not take that which is another’s, but he gives the honour to God, and retains the vileness for himself. You will understand this more clearly, if you consider the injustice of the proud, who attributes to himself the gifts of the Lord. Of him S. Bernard thus speaks: “As evils are wont to arise from great goods, when we, exalted by the possession of them, use them as if they were not given to us, and give not the glory to God; so we who seemed to be greatest on account of the grace which we had received, through our want of a right acknowledgment of those gifts, are accounted least before God. But I spare you. I have used the milder terms, ‘greatest’ and ‘least,’ but I felt the words to be inadequate. I veiled the real truth; I will now lay it bare. I should have said ‘very good’ and ‘very wicked.’ For truly and undoubtedly, any one is so much the more wicked, in proportion as he has advanced and attributes that advancement to himself. For this is the worst offence. But if any one should say, ‘Be this far from you, I admit that by the grace of God I am what I am,’ yet still eagerly desires glory from the grace which he has received, is he not a thief and a robber? Let such a one hear the words, ‘Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant.’ What can be more wicked than for a servant to usurp to himself the glory of his Lord?” Hitherto S. Bernard. You see, then, how the perfection of righteousness consists in lowliness, and neither robs God of His honour, nor ascribes to itself what it ought not. And certainly it is not hurtful to our neighbour. For the humble does not judge his neighbour, nor prefer himself to him, but esteems himself less than all, and chooses for himself the lowest place. Concerning whom S. Bernard again thus speaks: “How knowest thou, O man, but that the one whom perhaps thou countest to be the most vile and miserable of all, whose life thou abhorrest as most

sinful and notoriously foul, and therefore thinkest that he ought to be spurned, not only when compared with thyself, who art perhaps confident that thou livest soberly, justly, and piously, but also when compared with all other wicked men, as the most abandoned of all; how knowest thou, I say, but that he shall become, by the change of the right hand of the Most High, better than both thee and them, nay, perhaps is so already in the sight of God? God therefore wills us to choose not the middle place, nor even the place last but one, not even one of the lowest places; but ‘go,’ saith He, ‘and sit down in the lowest room,’ that you may sit alone, the very last of all, and not presume, I do not say, to prefer yourself, but even to compare yourself to any one.” Thus far S. Bernard.

In many places the same S. Bernard commends this virtue of humility. He says, “A great mother and lofty virtue is humility, which earns for us that which teaching cannot give; is worthy to obtain what cannot be obtained by learning; is worthy to conceive from the Word and by the Word, that which it cannot itself explain in its own words. Why is this? Not because of merit; but because it seemed good in the sight of the Father of the Word, the Spouse of the soul, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is over all God, blessed for ever.” So again, “Humility is the virtue through which, with the truest knowledge of himself, any one counts himself vile.” Elsewhere he says, “Humility is the only virtue which makes reparation to wounded love.” Again he says, “Humility alone is not wont to boast, has no mind to presume, and has no habit of contention. He who is truly humble does not contend in judgment, nor pretend to be righteous.” Humility, forsooth, reconciles us to God, and renders us pleasing in His sight. Again S. Bernard says, “The virtue of humility is ever intimately associated with Divine Grace.” Indeed, in order to preserve lowliness, Divine piety is accustomed to ordain, that the more any one advances, the less does he think himself to have advanced. For even to the highest degree of the spiritual life, whatever advance any one may have made, something of the imperfection of the lowest stage will remain, so that it will seem to him that he has not even reached that.

Again S. Bernard says, “Lovely is the combination of virginity and lowliness, and no slight delight to God is that Soul in which humility commends virginity, and virginity adorns humility. How greatly, then, ought she to be revered, in whom fecundity exalts humility, and child-bearing

consecrates virginity. You hear that she is a virgin, you hear that she is humble. If you cannot copy the virginity of the humble, copy the humility of the virgin. Praiseworthy is the virtue of virginity; but humility is the more necessary. The former is of counsel, the latter of precept. To the one you are invited, to the other you are obliged. Of the former it is said, 'He that is able to receive it, let him receive it;' of the latter, 'Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.' The one, then, is remunerated; the other is exacted. You can, in short, be saved without virginity; you cannot without humility. Humility, I say, can please, which deplores the loss of virginity. Without humility, I dare to say, not even the virginity of Mary would have been pleasing. Upon whom, saith He, shall My Spirit rest, except upon the humble and peaceful? If Mary, then, had not been humble, the Holy Spirit would not have rested upon her. If upon her He had not rested, she would not have conceived. For how without Him, could she have conceived by Him? It is manifest, therefore, that in order that she might conceive of the Holy Ghost, as she asserts, the Lord had 'regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden,' rather than her virginity. Whence it follows, that her humility without doubt was the means of rendering her virginity pleasing to God. What dost thou say, proud virgin? Mary ignores her virginity, and glories in her lowliness; and you, forgetful of lowliness, flatter yourself upon your virginity. He 'regarded,' saith she, 'the lowliness of His handmaiden.' But who was she? A virgin holy, a virgin sober, a virgin devout. Art thou more chaste than she? Art thou more devout? Or is thy modesty more acceptable than Mary's chastity? Is it, indeed, so great that it will suffice without lowliness, without which hers could not do? In short, the more honourable thou art from this singular gift of chastity, so much the greater injury dost thou inflict on thyself, when thou dost sully the fairness of thy life by the admission of pride." Again, "Charity, chastity, and lowliness are of no colour, but not of no beauty; rather their beauty must be rare, as they possess the power of delighting the Divine gaze. What is more lovely than chastity, which makes a clean thing out of one unclean from his birth, a friend out of an enemy, an angel, in short, out of a man? An angel and a man differ, indeed, from each other but in felicity, not in virtue. And if the chastity of the one is more blissful, that of the latter is more the sign of strength. It is chastity alone which, in this place and time of mortality, represents in a sort of way the state of

immortality and glory. Chastity alone, amid the nuptial ceremonies of this lower world, claims for itself the character of that blessed land, in which they neither marry nor are given in marriage, affording already in some sense a foretaste of that heavenly conversation. Frail, in the meanwhile, is the vessel which we bear about with us, in which often we are in danger; yet chastity holds it in a state of sanctification, like the sweet balsam, which preserves the embalmed bodies from corruption. It controls the senses and restrains the members of the body, lest ease dissolve, or desires contaminate, or pleasures of the flesh render them putrescent.” And then again, “Whatever be the surpassing loveliness with which chastity appears adorned, yet without charity it has neither value nor merit. Nor is this wonderful. For what good can we have without charity? Faith? No, not if it should remove mountains. Knowledge? No, not if it should speak with the tongues of angels. Martyrdom? No, not if, he says, I should give my body to be burned. Neither without it is any good accepted, nor with it is the least good rejected. Chastity without charity is a lamp without oil. Take away the oil, and the light will not shine. Take away charity, chastity will no longer please.” And further on, in the middle of the letter, “Now, of the three which we proposed, humility alone shall be handled, which is so necessary to the two aforesaid virtues, that without it they do not even seem to be virtues. That chastity or charity may be obtained, humility must render the soul worthy of them. For ‘God giveth grace to the lowly.’ Humility also preserves the virtues which have been gained; for the Spirit will not rest except on the peaceful and humble. Humility also perfects the virtues; for virtue is made perfect in weakness—that is, in humility. It overcomes that enemy of every grace and source of all sin, pride; and propels from itself and from every other virtue its arrogant tyranny. For it is rather from other goods that pride increases its strength. But humility alone of all virtues, as a sort of fortress and tower, makes a strong resistance to its malice, and opposes presumption.” Thus far S. Bernard. You find, then, many beautiful remarks concerning humility in the writings of S. Bernard, who was himself most truthful and most humble. See, also, what he says of other virtues, that you may know their nature and practise them. But now let us return to the Baptism of our Lord. As soon as John discovered the will of the Lord, he yielded, and baptized Him.

Now, therefore, consider Him attentively. For the Lord of Majesty unclothes Himself, like any ordinary mortal, and is immersed in the cold water, at a very inclement season; for love of us, He works our salvation, instituting the Sacrament of Baptism, and washing away the guilt of our sins. Thus He espoused to Himself the Church as a whole, and each individual soul. For in Baptism, when we profess our faith, we are truly espoused to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Prophet says, in His person, “I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness.” Whence this is a very solemn act, and a mystery of great service and benefit to man. And therefore the Church sings, “To-day is the Church joined to her heavenly Bridegroom, for in Jordan Christ hath washed away her sins.” And in this most illustrious week, the whole Trinity in a singular manner manifested itself, “for the Spirit of God descended like a dove, and lighted upon Him; and the voice of the Father resounded, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” But in this place S. Bernard says, “ ‘Hear ye Him,’ He saith; behold, O Lord Jesus, begin then now to speak; you have permission from your Father. How long, O Power of God and Wisdom of God, as one weak and senseless, wilt Thou remain hidden among the people? How long, O noble King and King of Heaven, wilt Thou suffer Thyself, the carpenter’s Son, to be so reputed? For according to the testimony of the Evangelist S. Luke, Thou wert still supposed to be the son of Joseph. O humility of Christ, how dost Thou confound the pride of my vanity! My knowledge is most trifling, yet I flatter myself that I know much, and cannot keep my tongue still. For without modesty and discretion, I push myself forward boastfully, ever ready to speak, swift to teach, slow to hear. And Christ all this time was silent, and hid Himself; and why? Had he to fear vainglory? No. How could He fear vainglory, who is the true glory of the Father? He did, however, indeed fear it, but not for Himself. He feared it for us, knowing how much ground there was to make us afraid. For us He took precautions, and us He thus taught; He was silent with His mouth, but He instructed by His actions; what He afterwards taught in words, He first proclaimed by His example, ‘Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.’ For about the infancy of our Lord I hear but little, but from that time to this His thirtieth year I find nothing. But now no longer can He lie hid, because He is so openly manifested by His Father.” Thus far S. Bernard. It was his authority which I adduced in a former chapter, from which you learn how the Lord Jesus

remained humbly silent for our instruction. You see, then, how everywhere you scent the fragrance of His humility. Of it I am ever drawn to speak, for it is a magnificent virtue, and we need it much; and it is so much the more earnestly to be sought, and affectionately loved, as our Lord in all His actions so signally gave Himself to the practice of it.

CHAPTER XVII

Of the Fast and Temptations of Christ. Also of His Return to His Mother. Of Four Means of obtaining Purity of Heart. Of Prayer and its Many Fruits. Of resisting Gluttony. Why and for whom God worked Miracles

AFTER the Lord Jesus was baptized, He went immediately into the desert to a certain mountain, named “Quarantania,” about four miles distant, and there fasted forty days and forty nights, and, according to S. Mark, “was there with the wild beasts.” Here, then, attentively consider and behold Him; for He affords you the pattern of many virtues. He goes forth alone; He fasts, prays, and watches; He lies and sleeps on the bare ground, and lives amongst the brute beasts. Pity Him, then; for here, even more than at other times, His life is full of pain and bodily affliction; and from His example learn to exercise the self-same discipline. For here four things are enumerated, which pertain to the exercises of the spiritual life, and wonderfully help each other; namely, solitude, fasting, prayer, and bodily mortification. And it is by means of these principally, that we are able to attain to purity of heart, which purity is to be so greatly longed for, inasmuch as it in a certain way comprises all virtues. For it includes charity, humility, patience, and the other virtues, and withdrawal of all vices; for in company with vices or with defect of a virtue, purity of heart cannot continue. And therefore, in the Conferences of the holy Fathers, we are taught that the whole object of a religious person ought to be the attainment of purity of heart, for it is that by which man obtains the sight of God, as the

Lord says in the Gospel, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And according to S. Bernard, the clearer a man is, the nearer he is to God. To be clear from every stain is to have attained. But in order to reach this state, frequent and constant prayer is of great importance, concerning which you shall be more fully taught hereafter. But prayer, accompanied with intemperance and gluttony, or with ease and idleness, is not of much avail. And then, fasting and bodily mortification are necessary, but with discretion, for the lack of discretion will mar every good action. But besides these, and to turn all these to account, there must be retirement; for in the midst of noise and tumult, it seems hardly possible for prayer to be performed aright; and many things cannot be seen and heard without danger to purity of heart. For death enters through our windows into our souls, and therefore our Lord has taught us by His example, that we should go into solitude, that is, as much as possible, withdraw ourselves from the companionship of others, and be alone, if we wish to be united to Him, and through purity of heart see Him. Shun also gossiping, and especially with worldly persons. Do not seek to form new attachments and friendships, and do not fill your eyes and ears with that which is vain and unreal. And all those things which disturb the quiet of the soul and the repose of the mind, avoid as so much soul-destroying poison. For it was not without cause that the holy Fathers sought out woods and most retired spots, far from the haunts of men, for their dwelling-places. It was not without cause that they recommended those who remained in religious communities to be blind, and deaf, and dumb. But that you may understand this the better, hear what S. Bernard says upon it: "Do you, I say, if you are moved to follow the attractions of the Holy Ghost, and if you begin to burn with the desire of making your soul fit to become the spouse of God, according to the words of the prophet, 'sit alone,' for you have raised yourself above yourself, wishing to be espoused to the Lord of angels. Are you not, indeed, above yourself, if you cleave to God, and are one spirit with Him? Sit, therefore, solitary like the turtle, have nothing to do with the crowd, nor with the multitude, forget also thy own people and thy father's house, and the Lord shall desire thy beauty. O holy soul, be alone, that thou mightest serve Him alone, Whom out of all thou hast chosen for thyself. Shun the public gaze, avoid also sometimes thine own household, withdraw also from thy friends and intimate companions, even those nearest to you. Do you not know that

your Spouse is bashful, and that He will not vouchsafe His presence, when you are in the company of others? Withdraw, then, but in mind, not in body; withdraw, then, that is, as far as intention is concerned, with devotion, and in spirit. For Christ the Lord is present with you in spirit, and spirit requires not solitude of body. Nevertheless, it is not without profit sometimes to withdraw yourself in body also, when opportunity offers, especially in time of prayer.” And again: “You are alone, if your thoughts are set on the one thing needful, if you are not affected by what is passing around you, if you despise what the multitude prizes, if you have a distaste for what the multitude relishes, if you avoid strife, if you are insensible to injuries, and retain no remembrance of affronts; otherwise, though you may be quite alone outwardly, you are not really alone. Do you see, that you may find solitude in the midst of a crowd, and yet not find it when you are by yourself alone? You are alone, however great the number of persons may be with whom you converse, if you only avoid inquisitiveness, or passing a censorious judgment on what is said.” Thus far S. Bernard. You observe, then, how necessary a thing is solitude, and how retirement of body is of no avail without solitude of spirit; and further, that bodily retirement is most effective in producing mental solitude, for it prevents the mind from going forth to external things, and enables it to hold undistracted communion with its Spouse. Therefore endeavour with your whole heart, as far as in you lies, to imitate your Lord and Spouse, Jesus Christ, in withdrawal from the world, in prayer, in fasting, and in discreet mortification of the body.

Moreover, from His remaining among the wild beasts, learn to live humbly amongst others, and to bear patiently with those who seem sometimes to behave themselves unreasonably. Often pay your Lord a visit during this time of His solitude. Behold Him, how He converses there, and especially how He lies upon the ground night after night. For every faithful soul ought to visit Him in spirit at least once every day, mostly from Epiphany to the end of the forty days’ sojourn in the desert. Now, when the forty days were completed, the Lord hungered. Then the Tempter came to Him, wishing to put Him to the trial, whether He were the Son of God or not; and he tempted Him with gluttony, saying, “If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” But he could not deceive the Master, for He replied in such a manner, as neither to yield to the temptation, nor to let the adversary know what He wanted. For He neither

denied nor asserted Himself to be the Son of God, but convicted him by the authority of Scripture. And note here, from the example of our Lord, how gluttony ought to be resisted, and that we must begin with it, if we would overcome other vices. For it seems, that he who is overcome by gluttony, in vain attacks other vices because of his weakness. For there, the commentator upon this passage in S. Matthew says, “unless gluttony be first overcome, in vain do we struggle with other vices.” Then the devil took Him up, and carried Him to Jerusalem, about eighteen miles. I merely give distances in this book on hearsay, and not from personal knowledge of the parts herein mentioned. Consider, then, the goodness and patience of our Lord. For He suffers Himself to be borne and handled by that savage beast, who thirsted for His Blood, and for that of all His loving followers. Then, having placed Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, He tempted Him with vainglory, wishing, as before, to put Him to another test; but here again he was met by the authority of Scripture, and his intention frustrated. As our Lord had during these two temptations given no sign of Divinity, the Enemy, according to S. Bernard, came to the conclusion that He was mere man, and framed the third temptation accordingly. Thence the devil, then, took Him unto a high mountain about two miles from Quarantania, and there he tempted Him with avarice; but here the murderer was again foiled. You have seen how the Lord Jesus was handled and tempted; are you, then, surprised if we are tempted? He endured temptations, too, at other times. Whence S. Bernard says, “Those who reckon but three temptations of our Lord are ignorant of Scripture, for therein we read the life of man upon earth is continual temptation. And the Apostle says that ‘He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.’ ”

When He had completed the victory, Angels came and ministered unto Him. Here diligently attend, and behold our Lord as He is eating, and Angels encircling Him, and consider carefully all things which happened, for they are full of beauty and calculated to excite devotion. And what, I ask, did the angels bring Him to eat after so long a fast? The Scriptures do not tell us. We may, therefore, picture this victorious repast as our devotion leads us. And indeed, if we regard the matter in point of power, the question is solved. For He could create whatever He willed, or have whatever He chose of that which was already created. But we do not find Him exerting this power either for Himself or for His disciples; for the multitude,

however, He did employ it, whom He fed in large numbers on two occasions with a few loaves. But of His disciples we read, that in His Presence they plucked the ears of corn from hunger, and did eat them! Likewise, when, wearied with His journey, He sat by the well talking with the Samaritan woman, it is not said that He created food, but that He sent His disciples into the city to buy food. Neither is it likely that He worked a miracle for Himself in the wilderness, for He wrought miracles for the edification of others, and in the presence of many witnesses. But here none were present but the Angels. What line of thought, then, should we pursue about this? Here was no human dwelling-place nor any food prepared. It must have been, then, that the Angels brought Him viands already prepared, as they did to Daniel. For when Habakkuk the prophet had prepared pottage for his reapers, the Angel of the Lord is said to have carried him by the hair of his head from Judæa to Babylon to Daniel, that he might eat, and afterwards in a moment brought him back. Let us pause a while, and look at the subject in this manner, and delight ourselves with our Lord in this His repast, and enter into the sentiments of joy which His most excellent mother would feel, if she heard of the triumph of her Son. As soon as Satan is repulsed, angels throng the air, coming in vast multitudes to our Lord Jesus Christ, and prostrating themselves before Him, saying, "Hail, Lord Jesus, our God and our Lord!" And our Lord humbly and benignly receives them, and bows His head, mindful that as man He was made a little lower than the Angels. The Angels say to Him, "O Lord, Thou hast fasted much; what wilt Thou that we shall make ready for Thee?" And some have imagined Him replying, "Go to My dearest mother, and if she has anything prepared, bring it to Me; for of no food do I eat with such pleasure as of that which comes from her hand." Then two of them set out, and in a moment are with her; and when they had saluted her, and informed her for what end they had come, the same legend says they bore away some pottage which she had prepared for herself and Joseph, and some bread, with a table-cloth, and other necessities; and perhaps the Blessed Mother purchased a few small fish, as far as her means allowed, which also we can imagine that they took with them. On their return the Angels place the viands on the ground, and solemnly pronounce words of benediction. Here regard Him carefully in all that He does. He sits down on the ground composedly, and He partakes of the repast with decorum and sobriety. The Angels stand around, ministering

to their Lord. One serves Him with bread, another with wine, another makes ready the small fishes, and others sing one of the songs of Zion, and rejoice and keep festival before Him. If it may be said, however, their festival was mingled with the deepest commiseration, which should mar us also to tears. For they reverently behold Him, and—seeing Him their God and Lord, the Creator of the whole world, “who giveth food to all flesh,” thus humbled, and needing to be sustained with bodily food, and eating as the rest of mankind, they are touched with pity. And you, too, cry out and say, “O Lord, what great things hast Thou done? all Thy works are marvellous; help me, that I may suffer something for Thee, who hast borne so many and so great things for me.” Surely this alone ought to kindle in you a fervent love for Him.

At length the repast was ended, and angels, perhaps, report to His mother what had taken place, and announce to her that He would soon return. And, having accomplished His commands, He said to all, “Return to My Father, and to the land of true joy, for I must for a while continue My pilgrimage; and I pray you, remember Me to My Father, and the whole court of Heaven.” And they, prostrating themselves, begged for His benediction, which, when they had received, they returned to their country, and fulfilled His bidding, and noised abroad His victory, so that the whole court of Heaven rejoiced at their tidings. But the Lord Jesus, wishing to return, began to come down from the mountain. Behold Him again attentively; how He walks alone and barefoot—He, the Lord of all—and excite a lively compassion for Him. On His arrival at Jordan, John saw Him coming to him, and said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” This is He upon whom I saw the Holy Spirit rest, when I baptized Him. And on the next day, when he saw Him walking near Jordan, he said again, “Behold the Lamb of God.” Then Andrew, and also another of John’s disciples, went after Jesus. And the loving Lord, thirsting for their salvation, in order to inspire them with confidence in Himself, turned Himself to them, and said, “What seek ye?” and they replied, “Master, where dwellest Thou?” Then He led them to the house to which He was wont to return in those parts, and they abode with Him that whole day. After that, Andrew brought Peter, his brother, to Jesus, whom He gladly received; for He knew what He intended to make of him. And He said to him, “Thou shalt be called Cephas;” and then our Lord’s intimacy and acquaintance with them

commenced. After this, the Lord Jesus willed to return into Galilee, and He accordingly left those parts and commenced His journey. Once more pity Him, and in spirit accompany Him, for He walks barefooted and alone all the way, about fourteen miles. When He reached His home, doubtless His mother, seeing Him, arose at once to greet Him with inexpressible delight, and received Him in her arms with the closest embraces; and He next greeted her, and also His foster-father Joseph, and, perhaps, abode with them as of yore a brief while.

CHAPTER XVIII

Of the Opening of the Book in the Synagogue

UP to this point, by the grace of God, we have treated the Life of the Lord Jesus according to the order of events, omitting little or nothing of all that happened to Him, or of His own doings; but I do not intend to pursue the same course hereafter. This Work would become too long, if I were to touch upon all that He said and did, and to attempt to bring all within the compass of these meditations; especially as it is of the greatest moment that we should, after the custom of S. Cecilia, continually bear deeply engraven on our hearts the facts of Christ's life. Let us, then, make choice of some of His actions on which, in meditation, we may assiduously occupy ourselves up to the time of His Passion; for, after that, nothing must be omitted. Neither ought we to dismiss from consideration anything altogether, or cease to insert it in its right place and time. But I do not intend for the future to treat these meditations at so great a length, except on rare occasions. For it suffices that you place before the eyes of your mind that which was done or said by Him, and that you hold colloquy with Him, and become familiar with Him. For in this seems to consist the greater sweetness and efficacy, and, as it were, the entire fruit of these meditations, that everywhere and always you devoutly behold Him in some act of His; as when, for instance, He stands in the midst of His disciples, and when He is with sinners; when also He speaks to them, when He preaches to the crowd, when He goes out, when He sits, when He sleeps, when He watches, when He eats, when He ministers to others, when He heals the sick, and when He works other miracles. But on these, and on similar occasions, observe all His gestures, and especially the expression of His features, if you can form some

conception of it, which seems to me more difficult than anything which has been before mentioned. Observe also attentively whether He, perchance, looks graciously upon you. Recur to what has been said in this chapter for instruction upon all which follows, and whatever I relate hereafter, unless in the meditations in question I suggest a different course, and in those which I shall omit, refer to this place, and it will be a sufficient guide to you. Let us now proceed with the following subjects.

After, then, the Lord Jesus returned from His Baptism, the Master of humility lived in a humble manner, as He had been accustomed to do. He began, however, by degrees to manifest Himself to some, by teaching and preaching in secret. For He is not said to have assumed publicly the office of preaching during the whole of the following year; namely, not until the miracle which He wrought at the marriage feast, and which happened on the same day as His Baptism, a year after it. And if on some occasions He preached and His disciples baptized, yet neither did He nor His disciples habitually preach before the imprisonment of John, as afterwards they did. In this, giving us an example of amazing lowliness, in humbly deferring to John, who was so greatly His inferior in preaching, as we may piously imagine or conclude from what we have seen before. He did not, then, begin His public ministry with noise and pomp, but humbly and gradually.

On one Sabbath-day, then, when He was in the synagogue with the assembly of the Jews, He stood up to read in the book of Isaiah, and He read the passage where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor." And then, when He had shut the book, He said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." Behold Him, then, how humbly He undertakes the office of reader. With a benign and placid face He reads among them, and expounds the Scripture; and how humbly He begins to manifest Himself, when He says, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled;" that is, "I am He of whom the Prophet speaks." And the eyes of all were fixed upon Him, on account of the efficacy of His words, and His lowly and gracely appearance; for He was most beautiful and most eloquent. Of both the Prophet thus had spoken, "Thou art fairer than the children of men; full of grace are Thy lips."

CHAPTER XIX

On the Call of the Disciples

AND now the Lord Jesus began to call His disciples, and to make our salvation His anxious concern, always, however, preserving lowliness. He called Peter and Andrew on three different occasions. The first was that to which I have already alluded, when He was at Jordan, when they became to some degree acquainted with Him. The second was from the ship, when they had caught a multitude of fishes, as S. Luke records. The third was from the ship, as S. Matthew relates, when He said, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed Him." Similarly He called James and John, upon those last two occasions before mentioned, and the account is to be found in the same parts of Scripture with those of Peter and Andrew. He called also John at the marriage feast, as S. Jerome says, though in Scripture it is not mentioned. He called also Philip, saying, "Follow Me," and likewise Matthew the Publican. Of the way the rest were called, there is no record. Consider Him, then, and behold Him as He is thus calling His different disciples, and holding converse with them; how affectionately He calls them, behaving towards them in an affable, homely, indulgent manner, attracting them inwardly and outwardly, introducing them into His mother's house, and sociably visiting their homes. He taught and instructed them, and made them His chief care, as a mother with an only son. It is said, and the tradition is ascribed to S. Peter, that whenever He slept in any place with them, rising by night He would look to see if any one of them was uncovered, and would cover them, so tenderly did He love them. For He knew what He was about to make of them; although they were men of mean condition and of humble birth, yet He was about to appoint them princes of the world, and leaders of all the faithful in the spiritual warfare. And

consider, on behalf of God, what were the beginnings of the Church. The Lord would not choose the wise and mighty of this world, lest the works which He was about to bring to pass should be attributed to their own worth; these He reserved to Himself, and redeemed us by His own goodness, power, and wisdom.

CHAPTER XX

Of the Change of Water into Wine at the Marriage Feast

THOUGH it is uncertain whose marriage it was in Cana of Galilee, as writers have remarked, yet we may suppose, for meditation, that it was that of S. John the Evangelist himself, as S. Jerome seems to affirm in the preface to S. John. The Blessed Virgin was present, not as one of the invited guests, but as an elder sister, and as one of greater dignity; she was in her sister's house as in her own, as manager and mistress of the entertainment. This we gather from three things. First, because it is written that "the mother of Jesus was there," but of Jesus and His disciples that they were invited to the feast, as doubtless all the rest were. Perhaps when the sister of the Blessed Virgin, Mary Salome, the wife of Zebedee, came to her to Nazareth, which was about fourteen miles from Cana, in order to tell her that she intended to celebrate the marriage of her son John, the Blessed Virgin returned with her some days before the approaching entertainment took place, to make the requisite preparation; hence, whilst others are said to have been invited guests, of her it is only said that she "was there." Secondly, we have a hint to the same effect, in the fact that she was the one who called attention to the deficiency in the supply of wine, which, had she been simply a guest, she would not have done. It is evident that the provisions passed through her hands, and accordingly she knew of the lack. And if she had taken her place as a guest, would she have been by her Son, amongst the men—this modest mother? And, had she been in the company of the women, would she have found out that the wine was running short more than any other? And if she had, would she have risen from the table and gone to her Son? It would have seemed quite unfitting; and therefore it

is probable that she was not seated amongst the guests. We are told of her, moreover, that she was ever ready to help others. Thirdly, it may be concluded from this, that she gave orders to the servants to go to her Son, and do whatsoever He bade them; so that it appears that she was in a position of authority, and had the supervision of the feast, and on that account was anxious that there should be sufficient for all.

Viewing, then, the matter in this light, behold the Lord Jesus eating as any one of the people, and sitting in a low place, and not amongst the chief guests, as we may gather from the passage in the Gospel. For, not after the manner of the proud, would He choose out the chief rooms at feasts, for He was soon to teach, "When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, go and sit down in the lowest room." But He "began to do," before He began "to teach." Turn now to the Blessed Virgin, and see how promptly and attentively she observes the needs of all, supplying the servants with whatever the guests require, and directing them how to wait upon them. And now, when, at the close of the feast, the servants come to her, saying, "We have no more wine to set before them," she replies, "I will procure you some more; wait a little." And going down to her Son, whom we may depict, as I have said, as sitting humbly at the end of the table, near the door of the room, she said to Him, "My Son, the wine is failing, and our sister is poor, and I know not how we shall get more." But He answered, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"

This answer seems hard, but it was for our instruction, according to S. Bernard, who says on this passage, "What hast Thou to do with her, O Lord? Art not Thou her Son; she, Thy mother? What hast Thou to do with her, dost Thou ask, Thou Who art the Blessed Fruit of her virginal womb? Is it not she who conceived Thee, and bore Thee, without loss of her virginity? Is it not she, in whose womb Thou remainedst for nine months, at whose virgin breasts Thou didst suck, with whom, when twelve years old, Thou didst go down from Jerusalem and to whom Thou wast subject? How is it, then, O Lord, that Thou dealest so severely with her by saying, 'What have I to do with thee?' Much in every way hast Thou to do with her. But now I see plainly that, not as indignant with her, or as desiring to confound the tender bashfulness of the virgin and mother, Thou saidst, 'What have I to do with thee?' For when the servants came to Thee, at her bidding, Thou didst do without hesitation what she suggested. Why, then, brethren, why

did He first give her such an answer? Evidently on our account, and for the sake of others who have been turned to the Lord, that the care of earthly parents should not render us too anxious, and that natural affections may not hinder the exercises of the spiritual life. For, so long as we are in the world, it is our duty to take care of our parents; but when we have forsaken ourselves, surely we should be free from anxiety respecting others. Thus, we read of a hermit who lived in the desert, that, when his brother came to him to seek his advice, he desired him to apply to another brother, who had died long before. Whereupon his brother remarked with surprise that he was dead; and the hermit replied, ‘So am I also.’ In the best manner, then, our Lord hath taught us not to be anxious about our relations more than religion requires, by the way He replied to His mother—and to such a mother! —‘Woman, what have I to do with thee?’ In another place, too, when some one announced to Him that His mother and brethren stood without, desirous to speak to Him, He answered, ‘Who is My mother, and who are My brethren?’ Where, then, are those who have such a carnal and vain anxiety about their relations, as if they still lived together?” Thus far S. Bernard.

His mother did not suffer herself to be discouraged by this reply, but, relying on His benignity, returned to the servants and said, “Go to my Son, and whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.” And they went, and filled the water-pots with water, as the Lord had bidden them. When this was done, He said to them, “Draw out now, and bear to the governor of the feast.” But in this, first note our Lord’s discretion, for He sent first to him who occupied the seat of honour. Secondly, he sat at some distance from Him, for His command is, “bear” it to the governor of the feast, as though he were some way off. For as he sat in the chief place, we can gather that our Lord did not wish to sit near him, but chose for Himself the lowest place. The servants then delivered the wine to him, and to the rest, disclosing the miracle, since they knew about it, and His disciples believed in Him. When the feast was ended, so the story runs, the Lord Jesus called John apart, and said to him, “Leave this your wife, and follow Me, for I will lead you to higher nuptials.” And John followed Him. By His presence at a wedding-feast our Lord approved carnal marriage as ordained of God. But in this, that He called John from it, He clearly gave us to understand that spiritual marriage is far more sublime.

After this, the Lord Jesus departed from thence, purposing from henceforth to be occupied publicly and openly with the work of our salvation. But first, it may be, He would conduct His mother to her home, for it was meet that the Blessed Virgin should have His company on the journey. Whereupon He takes her, and John, and His other disciples, and they enter into Capernaum, which is near Nazareth, and after some days they reach Nazareth. Behold them, then, on the road; how they walk together, the mother and the Son; how humbly they go on their way, and on foot, but very lovingly. O how great that Son! How pure that mother! Behold the disciples reverently following, and listening to the words of the Lord. For He was never idle, but was always engaged in saying or doing something good. It was not possible for His fellow-travellers, in such company, to grow fatigued.

CHAPTER XXI

Of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, which He began by speaking of Poverty

THE Lord Jesus, having called together His disciples, and drawn them apart from the crowd, went up with them into Mount Tabor, about two leagues from Nazareth, that He might impart to them His Doctrine; for it was fitting that He should teach them first and before others, as He was about to make them the masters and guides over others. Then He instructed them in many things, in a sermon full of beauty and richness; and no marvel, for the mouth of the Lord delivered it. He taught them the Beatitudes, and about prayer, fasting, and almsdeeds, and many other truths concerning virtues, which you can find in the Gospel itself. You should read it diligently and frequently, and commit to memory the record of it, for it is the essence of all that is spiritual. I do not intend here to go through the whole of it, because it would be too long; nor would such a mode of exposition fall in with the purpose of these meditations. I shall, however, for your edification intersperse some moral reflections here and there, both as they occur to me, and as quotations from the Saints suggest them. Let it suffice here to remark, that the Lord at the very beginning of this Sermon speaks of poverty, giving us to understand thereby, that poverty is the primary foundation of all spiritual discipline. By no means, then, can any one truly follow Christ, the mirror of poverty, when he is loaded with earthly riches. He is not free, but a slave, whose mind is under the dominion of temporal things. Therefore He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," etc. For of the thing which I affectionately love, I make myself, of my own will, the slave. For love, as S. Augustine says, is a weight of the soul, and bears it whither it is carried itself. And nothing should be loved except God or for God.

Truly, therefore, it is said, “Blessed are the poor,” for they set no value on anything for God’s sake, and thus their union with Him is very close. But of this poverty S. Bernard says thus: “Poverty is a sort of powerful wing, with which we can swiftly fly to the kingdom of Heaven. For in the other virtues which follow, the promise points to some future time; but with poverty it is not so much a promise as a gift, for it is said of the poor, “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Again he says, “For we see some who are poor, who, were they truly so, would not be found so pusillanimous and depressed, when they might be kings, yea, kings of heaven. But there are some who are willing to become poor, but only with the provision that they are to want for nothing, and who love poverty, only that they might not suffer distress.” Elsewhere the same Saint says, “ ‘And I, if I be lifted up, will’—I boldly assert—‘draw all to Me.’ For I do not rashly adopt the speech of my Brother, if I am clothed with His likeness. And if this be so, let not the rich of this world think that the brethren of Christ only have heavenly treasures, because they hear Him say, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ For these poor possess the earth; as, indeed, having nothing, and yet possessing all things; not begging as in a condition of wretchedness, but possessing as lords, and the more lords, the less they covet anything. To a faithful man, the whole world is a store of riches; the whole, I say, for both its adversity and its prosperity are alike subservient to him, and work together for his good. The avaricious man hungers for earthly possessions, like a beggar; the faithful man despises them, as a lord. The one, by possessing them, becomes a beggar; the other, by despising them, preserves them. Question any one of those, who with insatiable longing pant after worldly gain, as to what he thinks of those who sell all their goods and give them to the poor, that they may gain the kingdom of heaven for their earthly substance; whether he judges them to act wisely or not? Wisely, he will without doubt decide. Ask him then why he does not himself follow the course of which he has expressed his approval? ‘I cannot,’ he will say. But why? Surely, because avarice, as a mistress, will not permit him; because he is not free, he has no right to the things which he seems to possess, nor can he call them his own. If they are indeed yours, turn them to account, and exchange earthly for heavenly treasures. If you say, ‘I cannot,’ I shall say, then you are not the master of your wealth, but it is your master; you are its steward, not its proprietor.” Thus far S. Bernard.

But let us return to our meditation. Behold, then, and observe the Lord Jesus humbly sitting on the ground on the mountain, and His disciples round Him; how He was among them, as if one of them; and how affectionately, kindly, beautifully, and effectively He speaks to them, attracting them to the acts of the several virtues of which He speaks. And on every occasion, as I have before advised, try to contemplate His Face. Regard, too, His disciples, how humbly, reverently, and with what fixedness of mind they behold Him, and hearken to His wondrous words, and commit them to memory, and see what delight they enjoy in His every utterance and glance. In this contemplation, you try to share that sweetness of communion with Him, as if you yourself saw Him speaking, and were ready, at His bidding, to draw closer to His side, and to stay as long as the Lord permits you.

At the end of the sermon, behold the Lord Jesus, together with His disciples, coming down from the mount; and how, as He went on His way, the crowd of poor people in flocks follow Him, not in any formal procession, but as the hen is followed by her chickens, so that, whoever was able, might get near Him, and hear the better what He was saying. See also the crowds coming lovingly to meet, Him, and bringing their sick to be restored. “And He healed them all.”

CHAPTER XXII

Of the Centurion's Servant, and the Nobleman's Son, cured by Christ

NOW there was at Capernaum a certain centurion, that is, a captain of a hundred men, and he had a servant sick. And being full of faith, he sent to the Lord Jesus, in order that He might heal him. But the humble Lord replied, "I will come and heal him." When the centurion knew this, he sent back to Him, saying, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." On this Jesus commended his faith, and went no further, but healed the servant at a distance. But when, in the same city, a certain nobleman, that is, a petty ruler, went in person to Jesus and besought Him to come to his house and heal his sick son, Jesus declined to go, and chose to perform the cure at a distance. Here consider the value of faith in the case of the centurion, and the humility of the Lord, who willed to go Himself to the servant, but avoided the house of pomp and state. See, then, that we ought not to accept persons. Our Lord was ready to honour by His presence the soldier's servant more than the ruler's son. We ought, then, to beware of eye-service, and not to be influenced by external magnificence; we should rather look to the intention and goodness of him who may need our services, and not be guided by complaisance in our charitable actions but by charity.

CHAPTER XXIII

Of the Palsied Man, who is let down through the Roof and healed by the Lord

IN the city of which we have just spoken, Capernaum, whilst the Lord Jesus was teaching in a certain house, surrounded by Pharisees and doctors of the law, who had come out of every town of Judæa and Jerusalem, there came some people bearing a paralytic man, and wishing to bring him into the house that he might be healed by the Lord. When, on account of the crowd, they were unable to force an entrance, they went up to the roof of the house, and let him down from thence, and placed him before Jesus. And the Lord Jesus, seeing their faith, said, “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” But the Pharisees and doctors of the law, who were maliciously watching Him, said within themselves that He blasphemed against God; for God only can forgive sins, and this power Christ attributed to Himself, whom they believed to be mere man. The kind and lowly Lord, who searcheth the hearts and reins of men, answered, “Why think ye evil in your hearts?” And He added, “That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power upon earth to forgive sins,” etc.

There are four points here for meditation. First, the penetrating power of the mind of Christ, who saw their thoughts. Secondly, that sicknesses are often the result of sins, and that absolution from the sins sometimes brings deliverance from their effects. There is another instance of this, in the sick man healed at the pool of Bethesda, to whom our Lord said, “Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.” Thirdly, consider how great is the worth of faith. Even though it be the faith not of oneself but of another it is of avail, as we have just seen in the case of the centurion’s servant, and, as we shall presently see, in that of the woman of Canaan, through whose faith her daughter was healed. This takes place daily in the baptism of infants, who,

if they die before they reach years of discretion, receive, through the faith of their sponsors, an earnest whereby they are saved through Christ's merits—a doctrine opposed by the accursed teaching of some heretics. Fourthly, we ought to meditate upon our Lord sitting in the midst of them, and gently answering His malicious opponents, and working the miracle; in doing this, recur to the general rules which I have already laid down.

CHAPTER XXIV

Of the Restoration of Simon's Mother-in-law

IT came to pass that the Lord Jesus, in this same city of Capernaum, turned aside into the house of Simon Peter, where his mother-in-law lay sick with severe fever. Our humble Lord went to her and graciously touched her hand, and cured her, so that she arose immediately, and ministered to Him and His disciples. But what she gave them we are not told. Imagine, then, that in the house of a poor man, only coarse food would be at hand for the Lover of poverty, such as could quickly be prepared and got ready. Contemplate the Lord Jesus helping in this preparation of the viands, especially as it was in the house of a disciple. Imagine Him fulfilling various humble offices, such as laying the cloth, washing the things, and the like. For such things this Master of humility would do, who “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” Behold Him seated familiarly amongst the rest at the table, and cheerfully partaking of what was set before them, especially of the food, in which poverty, which He loved so well, was most conspicuous.

CHAPTER XXV

Of the Sleep of our Lord in the Boat

THE Lord Jesus, entering into a boat with His disciples, placed His head on the pillow, and composed Himself to sleep. For He was in the habit of spending a great part of His nights in prayer and watching, and of His days in the laborious employment of preaching. And whilst He slept a tempest arose, and His disciples were afraid that they were in danger of perishing; but they dared not to awake Him. At last, urged by fear, they did awake Him, saying, “Lord, save us; we perish.” And He arose, and reproached them for their little faith; and He rebuked the sea and the winds, and the tempest subsided.

In those acts behold and contemplate our Lord, according to the general rule, which I have already laid down and committed to you. Here there is a special consideration to be added—that, although He may at times seem to be asleep and regardless both of us and of our concerns, especially when we are in tribulation, yet He is really keeping a most diligent watch over us, and guarding us. And therefore we ought always to have a firm and unhesitating faith.

CHAPTER XXVI

Of the Raising of the Widow's Son by our Lord

AS once the Lord Jesus was going towards the city of Nain, He met a concourse of people, bearing to the grave the body of a young man, the son of a widow. Then the compassionate Lord Jesus was moved with pity, and touched the bier, "and they that bare him stood still." And He said, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." And he that was dead immediately arose, and He delivered him to his mother. "And there came a fear on all, and they glorified God." Go over these points of meditation as before.

CHAPTER XXVII

Of the Resurrection of a Young Girl, and how the Woman with an Issue was healed

ON the entreaty of a certain ruler, the Lord Jesus went with him to heal his daughter. And a great multitude accompanied Him, among whom was a woman, grievously afflicted, who is said to have been Martha, the sister of Mary Magdalen. “She said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole.” Accordingly, approaching Him with fear, she touched, and was freed from her complaint. But the Lord Jesus said, “Who touched Me?” And Peter answered, “Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me?” See here the patience of the Lord, Who often suffered from the presence of the crowd, for they were desirous to get near Him. But Jesus knew what He said, and again said, “I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me.” Then Martha made known the whole matter. Our Lord willingly worked the cure, and afterwards was pleased to admit her to close intimacy with Himself. And then He said to her, “Thy faith hath made thee whole.” You have here in this miracle our Lord’s commendation of faith; and you further see that the Lord would make His miracles to be known for the common good; but His own part in them, for the sake of humility, He hid, for in this instance what He wrought through Divine power He imputed to her faith.

Further, we have, in S. Bernard’s mode of introducing the subject, a great help towards preserving lowliness. “Every perfect servant of the Lord may be called the hem, as being the lowest part of our Lord’s garment, on account of the mean estimate he has of himself.” He who, then, has reached this state, and perceives that he is heard by our Lord in curing the diseased, or working other miracles, let him not vaunt himself on that account, nor

attribute it to himself, because not himself, but the Lord, hath wrought the wonder. For though Martha in this instance touched the hem of His garment, by touching which she trusted that she would be healed, and so it came to pass; yet it was not out of the hem, but from the Lord, the power of healing went forth. And therefore Christ said, “I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me.” Mind, then, and never again ascribe anything good to yourself, because the whole is from the Lord Jesus. After this, the Lord Jesus went to the ruler’s house, and found that his daughter was dead, and raised her to life again.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Of the Conversion of Mary Magdalen, and other things

OUR LORD, the very model of courtesy, one day accepted the invitation of Simon the leper, and went to dine with him, as He was wont to do, out of courtesy and kindness, and out of the zeal which He had for the salvation of souls, for which end He had come down from heaven. Therefore he eat with men and conversed with them in order to draw them to the love of Himself. The love of poverty was also an inducement. For he was very poor, and had nothing of this world's substance for Himself and His companions. Humbly and thankfully, then, did Jesus, the mirror of humility, accept invitations as occasion offered. But Mary Magdalen, hearing that our Lord sat at meat in the house of Simon, and having probably had some previous acquaintance with His preaching, and having been drawn to love Him ardently, though she had not yet given expression to her affection, smitten with deep sorrow of heart for her sins, and enkindled with the fire of His love, convinced that without Him she could not be saved, and resolving to delay no longer—went straight into the place where they were eating, and with her face turned towards the ground, and with downcast look, passed before all the guests, and did not stop until she came to the spot where her beloved Lord was. Then she prostrated herself at His feet, filled with heartfelt sorrow and deep shame for her sins, and she bent down and laid her face over His feet, with a certain confidence, for already she felt that she loved Him above all things; and she began, with a flood of tears and strong sobs, to say within herself, not audibly, “My Lord, I firmly believe, confess, and acknowledge that Thou art my God and my Lord. Many and great have been my offences against Thy Majesty, yea, my sins are more in number than the, sand of the

sea; but I—a wicked, sinful woman—flee for refuge to Thy mercy. I grieve and am filled with compunction for the past; I beseech Thy pardon; I resolve to amend, and never again to disobey Thy precepts. Oh, let me not suffer a repulse from Thee, for there is no other to whom I can turn for refuge; nor do I wish that there might be any other, for I love Thee only and above all things. Do not then cast me away from Thee, but punish me for my sins in whatever way Thou wilt; yet grant me forgiveness.” All the while the flood-gates were open, and the feet of Christ were being bathed and washed with her tears. From this incident you can plainly conclude that the Lord Jesus was barefoot. At length restraining her tears, and judging it unseemly that her tears should thus fall on His feet, she wiped them with her hair. With her hair, indeed, for she had nothing more precious with her with which to wipe them; and also because that which had formerly ministered to vanity, she would now fain turn to a better use. Moreover, she would not move her face far from the feet of her Lord, which with increasing affection she kissed lovingly again and again. And because the feet of the Lord were soiled with dust from His frequent journeys, she anointed them with costly ointment. Look, then, attentively at her, and meditate carefully upon these things, because of her devotion, who was so singularly beloved by our Lord; and also, remember this was a very solemn feast Behold, also, the Lord Jesus, how patiently He receives her, and how patiently He bears all that she does. He ceases and pauses from eating, until she has done. The guests also pause, and all wonder at this novelty. But Simon sharply censured Him in his heart, because He allowed Himself to be touched by such a woman, as if He could not be a prophet, nor have known who she was. Our Lord, then, by replying to the thoughts of his heart, manifested that He was a true prophet, and convicted him by the example of the debtors. And, desiring to show openly that all things are perfected in love, He said, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much.” And He said to her, “Go in peace.” O delightful and sweet utterance! how gladly did Magdalen hear it, and how happily did she withdraw! And now, perfectly converted, she henceforth led a holy and virtuous life, and with constancy clung to Jesus.

Meditate, then, on these points diligently, and try to imitate this so great charity, which is highly commended by our Lord both in word and in deed. For here you have a distinct proof that charity re-establishes peace between

God and a sinner; whence S. Peter says that “charity covereth the multitude of sins.” Seeing that charity is the soul of every virtue, and that nothing is pleasing to God without it, I will bring forward some authorities concerning it, for the purpose of making you strive with all your might to acquire it, and that will render you acceptable to your spouse, Christ Jesus. S. Bernard says of it, “Charity must be the most excellent gift, and plainly above all others, for the heavenly Bridegroom so repeatedly enforces it on His new spouse. Now, He says, ‘By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.’ Again He says, ‘A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.’ Again, ‘This is My commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.’ Also, praying that they ‘might be one, even as He and the Father are one.’ ”

And a little after, S. Bernard says, “In short, what can be compared with this grace, which is preferred to martyrdom itself, and to the faith which can remove mountains? This, then, is that which I say, Let peace be to you from within you, and nothing from without which may seem to threaten you shall terrify you, for it has no power to hurt you.” Again, “Let the excellence of a soul be measured by the charity which it possesses: for instance, the soul which has much charity, is great; the soul which has little, is little; the soul which has none, is nothing; as the Apostle testifies, ‘If I have not charity, I am nothing.’ If, however, the soul begin to have ever so small a quantity, so that it cares at least to love those who love it, and to salute its brethren and those who salute it, I would not assert that a soul in such a state was ‘nothing,’ retaining as it did, in giving and receiving at least, social charity. Yet, according to the saying of our Lord, ‘What does it do more than others?’ I cannot, then, think such a soul broad or great, but on the contrary narrow and little, when I find in it such a scant portion of charity. But should it enlarge and progress, so as to pass beyond the limits of this narrow and contracted love, and to embrace with full liberty of spirit the broad range of disinterested bounty, and to stretch itself so far with generous affection as to include within its bosom every neighbour, loving every one as itself, can it be still rightly said, ‘What dost thou more than others?’ Forsooth, such an one has made itself broad; has made broad, I say, the bosom of charity, which embraces all, even those who are not joined to us by ties of blood; those, too, who do not allure us by any hope of reward, and to whom we are not bound by claims of the past; those to whom we are not

under any obligation, unless it be that of which we read, ‘Owe no man anything, but to love one another.’ But if you will reach out still further, and as a pious invader attack the kingdom of charity at every point, and occupy it to its utmost extent, do not close your bowels of compassion even to your enemies, but ‘do good to them that hate you, pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you,’ and try even to be peaceful with those who hate peace; then, indeed, the breadth and height and beauty of your soul shall be like the breadth and height and beauty of the firmament. Then shall be fulfilled in it that which is spoken, ‘He spreadeth out the heavens like a curtain.’ And in this heaven of such wonderful breadth and height and beauty, the most High, Infinite, and Glorious God shall deign not only to dwell, but—so spacious is it—to walk therein.” Thus far S. Bernard. You have seen, then, how useful and necessary a virtue charity is, without which it is quite impossible to please God, and with which without doubt every one can become pleasing in His sight. Therefore, with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength, endeavour to gain it, for it will make you willingly undergo every hardship and all that is painful for the sake of God and your neighbour.

CHAPTER XXIX

How John sent his Disciples to Jesus

THE glorious soldier and forerunner of the Lord Jesus, John Baptist, was fettered and put in prison by Herod, for his defence of the truth, because he had rebuked him, for taking the wife of his brother who was still alive. Desirous of inducing his disciples to follow the Lord Jesus, he thought that he would send them to Him, so that, by hearing His words and seeing His actions, they might be inflamed with the love of Him and attach themselves to Him. They went, then, to Jesus, and said to Him in the name of John, “Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?” Now, the Lord Jesus had at that time a great crowd about Him. Behold Him, then, fixedly, how with calm face He receives the messengers of John, and how wisely He answers them—first by deeds, then by words. For in their presence He healed the deaf and dumb and blind, and did many other miracles, and preached to the people, and afterwards, amongst other things, said to John’s disciples, “Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see.” And they returned to John and related to him these things, and he heard them most gladly. And these disciples, after the death of John, attached themselves most firmly to Christ. On their departure the Lord Jesus commended John most highly before the people, saying that he was more than a prophet, and that amongst those born of women there had not risen a greater than he; and He went on to say other things as recorded in the Gospel. Look, then, continually at the Lord Jesus, both whilst He is preaching and when working the miracles before mentioned, and at all times, in the manner I have already suggested to you.

CHAPTER XXX

Of the Death of John the Baptist

THIS will be a fitting time to meditate on the death of S. John the Baptist. When, then, that most wicked Herod and his infamous adulteress had, perhaps, conspired together to put him to death, that he might no longer reproach them, it happened that at a feast day, when the wretched daughter, Herodias, danced and pleased Herod, that the head of John the Baptist was granted her. And accordingly he was beheaded in the prison. Behold how great a man the Baptist was, and how shamefully and unjustly he fell beneath the tyranny of a reign of wickedness. O God, how was it that Thou didst permit this? What shall we think of John dying in this manner—John, whose perfection and sanctity were so great that he was mistaken for Christ? If, then, it is your mind to enter into this subject, consider first the baseness of his murderers, and then the greatness of John and his singular eminence, and you may well call out the affection of wonder.

You have heard, in a former chapter, how John was commended by our Lord in many respects; hear now what S. Bernard says of him. “The first Church of all, after the names of the Saviour, takes that of S. John. It was, indeed, fit that the singular friend of the Bridegroom should also be exalted with His Spouse, the Church. Peter was crucified, Paul was beheaded, yet the dignity of precedence was given to the Forerunner. Rome is empurpled with the blood of martyrs, and sublime honours were bestowed on that holy patriarchate. Still John stands pre-eminent, with a singular greatness, and wonderful above all.

“Who so gloriously announced? Who so filled with the Holy Ghost in his mother’s womb? Who is said to have leapt with joy when yet unborn? Whose nativity does the Church celebrate as his? Who ever so loved solitude? Who ever conversed with others so sublimely? Who first preached

penitence and the kingdom of heaven? Who baptized the King of Glory? To whom was the Trinity so clearly revealed? To whom did the Lord Jesus Christ ever give such testimony? Whom has the Church so honoured? John is a patriarch; yes, the end and chief of Patriarchs. John is a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, because he not only foretold, but pointed out Christ. John is an angel, yes, elect among angels, for the Saviour testifies, saying, ‘Behold, I send My Angel,’ etc. John is an apostle, yes, first and foremost amongst Apostles, the first man ‘sent from God.’ John is an Evangelist, yes, the first herald of the Gospel, a preacher preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God. John is a Virgin, yes, a remarkable mirror of virginity, a type of modesty, a pattern of chastity. John is a Martyr, and more, the light of martyrs—between the Birth and Death of Christ, an heroic form of martyrdom. He is ‘the voice of one crying in the wilderness,’ the Forerunner of the Judge, the Herald of the Word.’ He is Elias—‘the law and the prophets were until John;’ he is ‘a burning and a shining light.’ I pass by in silence his relation to the nine orders of angels, and the more than Seraphic dignity with which he is invested.” Thus far S. Bernard. Hear now his praises by Peter Chrysogonus, Archbishop of Ravenna, in a certain sermon in which he says, “John is a school of virtues, the master of spiritual life, a pattern of sanctity, a rule of justice,” etc. If, then, you contrast John’s pre-eminent dignity and sanctity with the depth of their villainy who murdered him, you will indeed find matter for wonder and indignation, if such a thing were allowable, with God. For to what and how great a personage is the common executioner sent, as if to some vile and infamous assassin or plunderer. Regard the Baptist, then, reverently and with sorrow; how he prepares his neck at the bidding of the worthless and abominable executioner, how humbly he bends his knees, and, giving thanks to God, lays his sacred head upon the block or stone, and patiently receives the strokes until it is severed from his body. Behold, such is the end of John, the intimate friend and near relative of the Lord Jesus, in whom were lodged the deep secrets of God. With what great shame ought his example to affect us, who lose patience in the slightest trials? John, who was innocent, met death—and such a death, too—with patience; and we, who are for the most part guilty of great sins, and deserve the wrath of God, are not able to bear the smallest injuries and grievances, nay, not even injurious words.

The Lord Jesus was at that time in Judæa, but not near that part. When the death of John was reported to Him, our Divine Lord wept for His champion and relation; the disciples also wept with Him, and, possibly, so did the Blessed Virgin, who had received him at his birth, and had always most tenderly loved him. We can imagine how the Lord consoled His mother, and her lament, “My Son, why did You not defend him from such a death?” and the reply, “Loving mother, such a defence would not have been expedient; for he has died for My Father, and on behalf of His Just Law, but he will quickly be in glory. For the Father Himself does not purpose to defend His own in this world in such a manner; because they are not long to continue here—their country is not here, but in heaven. John is now freed from the chains of the flesh; nor can he die any more. The enemy raged against him as far as he could, but he shall reign with My Father for ever. Therefore, dearest mother, be consoled, for it is well with John for ever.” Some days after this, the Lord Jesus left those parts and returned to Galilee. Dwell, then, on all that we have said, and be in spirit present at those scenes, and meditate devoutly upon them, and whithersoever the Lord goes, go also.

CHAPTER XXXI

Of the Conversation with the Samaritan Woman

WHEN the Lord Jesus returned from Judæa into Galilee, He travelled seventy miles or more, and passed through Samaria, wearied with His journey. Behold Him, your God, how fatigued He is! He thus often walks, often is weary, and His whole life is full of toil. Then He sat by the well, and rested Himself; but His disciples went away into the town to seek for bread. Then came a certain woman—she is said to have been named Lucia—to the well for water. And the Lord began to converse with her, and to treat of sublime truths, and to manifest Himself to her.

What He said to her, how the disciples returned, how at the saying of the woman the people of the city came out to meet Him, how He went with them, stayed for a while, and then departed, I do not intend to relate; for it is all clearly set forth in the Gospel history. Read it, then, and behold the Lord Jesus Himself in all His actions. But from this account you may note certain beautiful and useful things. And first see the humility of our Lord; how the humble Lord remained quite alone and unattended during the absence of His disciples, for they were on familiar terms with Him; then, how humbly He talked with this unhappy woman by herself, and treated of such great mysteries, and conversed with her, as if His equal. For He did not disdain her, but, on the contrary, He answered her in such a manner as would have been wonderful even if He had been addressing an assembly of the wisest men. The proud do not act thus. For if they pour forth swelling words before a few, much less before one, they regard them as wasted, and count their hearers unworthy of them.

Secondly, consider His poverty and affliction of the body, and the humility which accompanied them. For here you are told how the disciples went away to the city to seek bread, and, having obtained it, how they brought it to Him, and wanted Him to eat. But where did He eat? No doubt at the well, or by some river or spring. See, then, how He refreshed Himself, wearied and famished as He was. And do not imagine that this was the only occasion when He so acted, but His general custom. Whence you can plainly conclude, that the humble Lord and lover of poverty often took His meals in the open air outside the dwellings of men, by some stream or spring, however tired or prostrated He might be. He was provided with no dainty food, no fine cups, no delicate wines, but with pure water from the spring or river. He who caused the vineyards to be fertile, who created the springs, and all that move in the waters, sat humbly on the ground, and took His meals as any poor man. In the third place, consider how intent he was on spiritual things. For when His disciples invited Him to eat, He said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work;" nor would He eat, until He had received the people who came from the city and preached to them, desirous of first attending to the needs of the soul before taking bodily refreshment, though He stood so greatly in need of it. Behold Him, then, in all the actions which have been mentioned, and strive to imitate His virtues.

CHAPTER XXXII

How they wished to cast our Lord down headlong from the brow of the Hill

WHEN the Lord Jesus Christ had returned to Nazareth, and the inhabitants wanted Him to work miracles, He showed them that they were not worthy to see them; which so kindled them with rage, that they drove Him out of the city. The meek Lord then fled before them, and they pursued Him. What think you of this? To such a height did their fury burn and increase, that they dragged Him to the top of the hill, that from thence they might cast Him down headlong. But the Lord, by Divine power passing through the midst of them, went His way; for the time when He had appointed to die had not yet come. There is a tradition, that when our Lord had escaped out of their hands, He went down the hill, and hid Himself in a cavern,—the rock, as wax, yielding to Him as He entered, and providing Him with shelter, and that traces of His garments were left imprinted on the stone. Behold Him, then, flying before them, and hidden in the rock; pity His sufferings, and endeavour to imitate His patience and lowliness.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Of the Man who had a Withered Hand, and was healed by the Lord

ON one of the Sabbath days the Lord Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, and there was a man there who had a withered hand, and Jesus made him stand forth in the midst, and then asked the doctors whether it were lawful to do good on the Sabbath day. But they made Him no answer. Then said Jesus to the man who had the withered hand, “Stretch forth thy hand,” and he was healed. Many times the Lord wrought miracles on the Sabbath days, to confound the Jews, who carnally interpreted the law, which God would have kept according to the spirit. For it was not intended that on the Sabbath days that good works, and deeds of charity, should be forbidden, but sinful actions and servile work. But they were greatly offended at Him on this account, and conspired against Him, saying, “This man is not from God, for He does not keep the Sabbath day.” But our Lord did not therefore cease from working; nay, rather He worked the more on the Sabbath, that He might draw them out of their error. Consider Him, then, performing the actions which we have just mentioned, and after His example do not desist from good works, even though another should be unjustly scandalized thereby. For a good work which is necessary for a soul’s salvation, or spiritual advancement, you ought not to leave off, for fear of offending another. But when it is a question of mere bodily satisfaction, according to the law of perfect charity, we ought to abstain, if it give offence to a brother. Wherefore the Apostle says in the Epistle to the Romans, “It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.”

CHAPTER XXXIV

Of the Multiplication of the Loaves, and how God provides for those who love Him

ON two occasions it is recorded, that our benign Lord multiplied a few loaves, and with them satisfied many thousands of men. But combine them into one meditation, and in it consider the words and deeds of Christ. Jesus said, then, “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way, for divers of them came from far.” Whereupon He multiplied the loaves, so that all eat abundantly. Here you have many good things to meditate upon, and especially how merciful, gracious, and kind the Lord Jesus was, and with what discretion and consideration He acted.

First, how merciful He was, for it was mercifulness which drew Him to help them, and therefore He says, “I have compassion on the multitude.” For “the earth is full of His mercy.”

Secondly, He was gracious and courteous in the cause which He assigns; “For behold,” says He, “they have now been with Me three days.” See the courteousness and wonderful grace of His behaviour. For He speaks as though He were under an obligation to them for remaining so long with Him, whereas, in truth, it was for their own good, and not for His. Yes, so it is, as He elsewhere says, “My delights are with the sons of men,” though it bring no advantage to Himself, but works our salvation. But those who follow Him, and keep His precepts and counsels, the Lord loves; nor will He close His hand against them, but will succour them according to their needs.

Thirdly, He showed discretion and circumspection, in that He considered their wants and their infirmity; how, if He sent them away fasting, they would faint, and how certain of them had come from a long distance. You observe, then, how wise and full of sweetness those words were. But spiritually we are daily in a like condition. For we have nothing to eat unless He give it; and we faint by the way, if He send us away fasting; and without Him we cannot provide for ourselves in any spiritual matter. We have no ground, then, for self-complacency, when we receive any consolation from the hand of the Lord, or when we are conscious of any progress in our spiritual life; because it is not from ourselves, but from Him. And therefore, if we are observant, we shall notice, that the more perfect the servants of God are, the nearer to Himself and the more rich in His gifts, the more humble they are, for they ascribe nothing to themselves, but their own sins and defects. For the nearer any one approaches to God, the more he is illuminated, and therefore the more clearly does he see the majesty and mercy of God; and so in him pride or vainglory can have no place, for they proceed from blindness of ignorance. For no one who has a true knowledge of God or of himself, and examines himself, can be proud. It is a long road by which we came to God: I speak especially of myself and of others who are like me, who had gone away from Him into a far country, through our sins. Any one, then, who returns to Him may be truly said to come from afar.

After the words of Christ which we have alluded to, He proceeded to actions. Behold Him, then, how He took the loaves, and gave thanks to the Father, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude, and in their hands multiplied them, so that all eat as much as they pleased, and many fragments were left. Consider, then, how He looked on them as they eat, and delighted in their enjoyment. Behold them also, how they wondered at the miracle, and how they talk together and rejoice together about it, eating with thanksgiving, so that not only their bodies, but also, at least in the case of some among them, their souls received refreshment. But was the Blessed Virgin there, and did she joyously hand the bread to the women, and delight in their satisfaction? Scripture does not say. Meditate, then, on this miracle, as the Lord enables you.

CHAPTER XXXV

Of our Lord's Flight, when they would make Him a King; and against the Love of Honours of the World

AFTER the Lord had fed the multitude, as mentioned in the previous chapter, they sought to make Him a king. For they concluded that He was capable of relieving their necessities, and that under such a king it seemed to them that they could never want. But the Lord Jesus, knowing their design, fled from them into a mountain, unknown to them, so that they could not then find Him. Our Lord, therefore, did not will to receive the honours of the world. And see how truly and unfeignedly He avoids them; for He sent away His disciples across the sea, and Himself ascended up into the mountain, so that if they sought Him any further amongst His disciples, they might not find Him. His disciples, however, were unwilling to be separated from Him, but He constrained them to enter into the ship, and to cross the sea. Their desire, indeed, was good, to wish to be always with their Lord; but He had disposed differently. See, then, with regard to them, how reluctantly they depart from Him, and how the Lord Jesus forces them, signifying to them that it was His wish that they should go into the ship without Him; upon which they humbly obeyed, however trying and hard it may seem to them. Thus daily does the Lord deal with us. For we would have Him never depart from us, but His pleasure is otherwise; He goes and returns as He wills, but ever with a view to our profit. Therefore I should like you to hear what S. Bernard says on this conflict. He speaks thus: "When the Spouse has been sought for with watchings and supplications, and with a copious shower of tears, suddenly, whilst He seems to be ours,

He escapes; and then again presenting Himself to us as we weep for and pursue Him, He suffers Himself to be taken; but not to be detained even for a short space of time, for suddenly again, whilst we think to hold Him, He eludes our grasp; but if the devout soul persist in prayers and tears, He will again return, and will not deny her the request of her lips. Yet soon again He will disappear, and be no longer seen, unless He is sought again with the whole desire of the heart. Thus, then, in this present life there may be frequent joy at the presence of the Spouse, yet not fulness of joy; because, though His visitations bring delight, yet the interchange of presence and absence gives pain. And such vicissitudes the beloved soul must suffer, until once for all, delivered from the burden of the flesh, it makes its escape, and soars aloft on the wings of its desires, truly ranging over the plains of contemplation, and following with unimpeded mind the Spouse whithersoever He goeth. Nor yet even to every soul which has passed beyond this present scene will He so reveal Himself, but only to those who have by great devotion, vehement longing, and sweet affection proved themselves His true spouses, and worthy of receiving the approach and visitation of the Word when clothed in glorious apparel, and with the beauty of the Bridegroom.” Again the same Saint says: “Perhaps Jesus thus withdraws Himself, that He might be the more abundantly sought after, and held more firmly. For at one time ‘He made as though He would have gone further;’ not that He so willed, but He wished to hear, ‘Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.’ ” And a little afterwards he adds: “This same pious feint, or rather, salutary dispensation, which the Word in the Body sometimes expressed to the body, He does not cease to exercise by His Spirit in a special manner in devout souls now. Passing by, He wills to be invited to stop; going away, He wishes to be recalled. To go, indeed, is a dispensation of Providence: to return is ever the desire of His will; but both are full of wisdom, and wrought for purposes known to Himself. It is, then, manifest, that the soul is tried by these vicissitudes of the going away and coming back of the Word, as He Himself says, ‘I go away, and come again unto you,’ and ‘a little while and ye shall not see Me, and again a little while and ye shall see Me.’ Oh, a little while, yet not a little while! Oh, a little while, and yet a long while, dear Lord! A little while, Thou callest it, and we shall not see Thee. With all reverence for the word of the Lord, it is a long while, and much too long a while; yet both are

true: it is a little while viewed as to our deserts, a long while viewed in reference to our desires. You find both mentioned in the Prophet: ‘Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.’ How can it both tarry, and not tarry; except that the coming will be expeditious if our deserts, and slow if our desires, are considered? The soul, indeed, borne forward by its longings, and drawn by its desires, overlooks its merits, closes its eyes to His Majesty, opens them to the joy of seeing Him, trusting in His salvation, and confiding in Him entirely. Fearless at last, and unbashful, the soul recalls the Word, and trustingly invites His embraces, calling Him with wonted freedom, not ‘Lord,’ but ‘Beloved,’ saying, ‘Return, my beloved.’ ” Again elsewhere he says, “These alternations cease not in those who are spiritual, or in those rather whom He intends to make spiritual, ‘visiting them every morning, and trying them every moment.’ ” Thus far S. Bernard.

You see, then, how the Lord Jesus spiritually visits the soul, and then leaves it, and what the soul at such times ought to do. It is her duty earnestly and persistently to recall Him, and in the meanwhile patiently to bear His absence, and after the example of the disciples, who obeyed Him by going into the ship without Him, to meet the storm, and to expect deliverance through His help. But let us now return to our Lord Jesus. As soon as the disciples had entered into the ship, and put out to sea, He went up into a mountain alone, and so escaped from the hands of those who sought Him. You see with what care and eagerness He fled from and declined the honour of a crown. He gave us an example, that we should do as He has done. For not for His own sake, but for ours, He fled. He knew, indeed, how rash we are apt to become, if we aspire to earthly honours. For honours are amongst the greatest snares that can entangle a soul, and among the greatest burdens for its overthrow which I know, whether it be the honour of prelacy or of secular power, or of learning. For it is almost impossible for men who delight in honours not to be in danger, as one who stands on the brink of a precipice, or rather, which is worse, is already dashed down a precipice; and this for many reasons which I will show you. First, because the mind inordinately delights in them, and is only concerned in preserving and increasing them. And, “in proportion as any one delights in lower things,” says S. Gregory, “is he alienated from Supernal Love.” Secondly, because such an one is bent on procuring friends, followers, and

confederates, through whose instrumentality and co-operation honour is maintained or heightened; and consequently many things are done which are in conflict with God and conscience, with a view to gratifying such friends, to induce them to lend him their support. In the third place, because he is jealous of those who have honours, and disparages them, that so he may advance himself, and thus he falls into hatred and envy. Fourthly, because he deems himself, and would be deemed by others, worthy of honour, and thus he falls into vanity and pride. But, according to the Apostle, "If any man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." And therefore the Lord says in the Gospel, "When ye have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants." But when does one desirous of honour say this? Fifthly, because he does not walk according to the Spirit, but according to the flesh, for his mind is not concentrated, neither is it elevated to heavenly things, but is distracted, and dissipated upon a variety of objects. Sixthly and lastly, because as soon as he begins to delight in honours, he becomes so allured by them, that he cannot be satisfied, and daily seeks new and greater honours, and the more he gets the more he thirsts for; for he ever persuades himself that he is honourable and worthy in some unusual degree, both in his own eyes and in the eyes of others; and thus he falls into ambition, which is the worst vice, and the root and cause of many others. Hear what S. Bernard says of its malignity, and not only what I say. "Ambition," says he, "is a subtle evil, and hidden poison, a secret pestilence, the author of deceit, the mother of hypocrisy, the parent of malice, a source of vices, the fuel of crimes, the rust of virtues, the moth of sanctity, the blinder of hearts, creating diseases out of remedies, engendering sickness out of medicine. How many has this pestilence wickedly supplanted, and also basely overthrown; so that others, who had not detected this occult sapper of the foundations, have been suddenly terrified at the sight of their ruin. But what nourishes this worm, so much as distraction of mind and forgetfulness of the Truth. For what but Truth can throw light on the subtleties of this traitor, and discover this work of darkness? Is it not the Truth which says, 'What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' And again: " 'Mighty men shall be mightily tormented.' Thus does the Truth bring as a solemn suggestion to our minds, how frivolous is the consolation of ambition, how heavy its

judgment, how short its gain, how obscure its end. You will remark that the third temptation of the Lord was to ambition, when all the kingdoms of the world were offered, if He would fall down and worship the tempter. You see the path to ambition is the adoration of the devil, and that the honours of the world and the glory thereof are attained on the condition that he is worshipped.” Elsewhere S. Bernard says, “We are eager to rise, and all desire exaltation; for we are noble creatures, and have a certain greatness of spirit, and therefore we naturally aspire to exaltation. But woe to us, if we wish to follow him who says, ‘I will sit upon the mount of the covenant, on the sides of the North.’ O wretch, on the sides of the North! cold is that mountain: we will not follow thee; thou hast the lust of power, and wouldst presume to take the highest dignity. Yet how many, even to this very day, do follow thy foul and miserable steps; or rather, how few are there who escape the thralldom of this common vice of ambition. Whom, then, are you following, wretched man? Whom are you following? Is not this the mount which, when the angel ascended, he became the devil? And are you not aware, that after his fall, tortured by envy, and wickedly anxious to supplant mankind, he pointed out to them another mountain like unto it, and said, ‘Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil’?” And a little after S. Bernard adds, “This ambition after power robbed the angel of angelic happiness; so the desire of knowledge stripped man of the glory of immortality. Let any one try to climb the steep of power, what opponents he will have to encounter, what foes to repel him, what obstacles, how hard a road! But what if he should succeed in gaining his object? ‘Mighty men,’ says Scripture, ‘shall be mightily tormented,’ and therefore I need not point out what present cares and anxieties the possession of power brings with it. Another man is ambitious of the knowledge which puffeth up; how he labours for it, what anxiety of mind he suffers; and yet after all he shall hear, ‘Though thou burst thyself, thou shalt not attain it.’ His eye shall rest in bitterness on any one whom he may see, or whom he may imagine others think, superior to himself. What if he swells himself with conceit? ‘I will destroy,’ saith the Lord, ‘the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.’ Without dwelling longer on this subject, you have seen, I think, how we must avoid both mountains, if we tremble at the perdition of the angels, or the fall of man. ‘Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you.’

“But what shall we do? We must not thus ascend, and yet we are possessed with the desire to rise; who then shall teach us a wholesome way of ascent? Who but He of whom we read, ‘He that descended, is the same also that ascended’? By Him the right path of ascension has been marked out, so that we might not follow the footsteps or counsel of that wicked leader and seducer. And because there was no one who could ascend, He, the Most High, descended, and by His descent consecrated for us a sweet and salutary ascent. He descended from the height of power, when He clothed Himself with the weakness of our flesh; He descended from the summit of knowledge, when ‘it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.’ For what can seem more weak than the little tender body and limbs of an infant? What more void of knowledge than a babe, who knows only the mother’s breasts? Who is more powerless than He whose limbs are all nailed to the cross, whose bones may all be counted? Who more foolish than He, ‘who poured out His soul unto death, and paid the things that He never took’? Do you see, then, how He who so deeply descended, emptied Himself of His power and of His wisdom? But He could not ascend higher into the mount of goodness, nor more forcibly commend His charity. Nor is it a wonder that Christ by descending ascended, when both the others by ascending fell.” In another place S. Bernard says, “Therefore, my dearly beloved, persevere in the discipline which you have received, that by humility you may ascend to sublimity; because this is the way, and there is no other beside it. He who tries any other road falls rather than ascends; for it is humility alone which ascends, and which exalts, and this only it is which leads to life.” And again, “O perversity, O ambition of the sons of Adam! Because when it is most difficult to ascend, but most easy to descend, they ascend with care, and descend with much difficulty, being ever ready for honours, for the highest posts, it may be, ecclesiastical dignities—formidable even for the shoulders of angels to bear. But to follow Thee, Lord Jesus, scarcely any one is found, any one who will suffer himself to be drawn, or desires to be led along the way of Thy commandments.” Thus far S. Bernard. From what has been said, it is manifest how you may attain to true honour, namely, by humility, and how the transient and false honour of the world is to be avoided. But, perhaps, some who are ambitious of knowledge and honour, flatter themselves by the specious pretext of gain to souls, as if they would

become thereby more capable of promoting the salvation of others. But hear how S. Bernard answers them: "Would that any one who thus enters upon some charge, if it might be so, might as faithfully fulfil it as he confidently thrusts himself into it. But it is difficult, nay, perhaps impossible, that from the bitter root of ambition should spring the sweet fruit of love." Thus far S. Bernard. But to arrive at this pitch of contempt for honours, you need to have attained a very high degree of virtue. For, as S. Chrysostom says, "To use honours well is as difficult, as to be in the company of some beautiful young creature, and to obey the law of never looking upon her." And therefore it is undoubtedly the case, that there is need of a very strong determination for one who possesses power or honour, if he would use it aright.

CHAPTER XXXVI

How our Lord prayed upon the Mountain, and, having come down from it, walked on the Water; and many Observations about Prayer

AS you have already heard, the Lord Jesus, having constrained His disciples to enter into the ship, Himself went up into a mountain. Let us finish the account, then, of what our Lord did after the miracle of the loaves, because the history is continuous, and the events which are contained in this meditation occurred at the same time. I have, however, divided them, that they may be the better understood, and that their moral teaching may be the more clearly explained. After, then, the disciples had entered into the ship, Christ Himself went up into the mountain, and there He continued in prayer till the fourth watch of the night; that is, until three-quarters of the night had passed, and the fourth only remained. Whence you see how long our Lord continued in prayer through the night, and it is often recorded that He thus gave Himself to prayer. Behold Him, then, how He prays and humbles Himself before the Father. He searches out solitary places, and goes alone to them; He afflicts Himself, and keeps long watches. The faithful Shepherd intercedes for His sheep; for He prays not for Himself, but for us, as our Advocate and Mediator with the Father. He prays, also, to give us an example of prayer. He frequently admonished His disciples about this, and in deeds confirmed His teaching. For He said to them, “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” And how importunity in prayer obtains what is asked, He illustrates by the example of the judge and widow, as you find in S. Luke. He exhorted them, when

they prayed, to have confidence that they would obtain what they asked, saying, “Ask, and it shall be given to you,” proposing to them another example in the friend who sent the loaves to his friend, on account of the importunity with which he begged for them, as you will also find in S. Luke. And this He said, to commend to us the virtue of prayer. It is, indeed, an inestimable virtue, and has power to obtain all that is good for us, and to remove all that is hurtful. If you would patiently bear adversity, be a man of prayer. If you would overcome temptations and trials, be a man of prayer. If you would tread underfoot corrupt affections, be a man of prayer. If you would detect the snares of Satan and avoid them, be a man of prayer. If you would live cheerfully in the work of God, and tread onward in the path of labour and affliction, be a man of prayer. If you would give yourself to a spiritual life, and not be occupied with the desires of the flesh, be a man of prayer. If you would put to flight the swarms of vain thoughts, be a man of prayer. If you would enrich your soul with holy and good thoughts, with desires, fervent aspirations, and devotions, be a man of prayer. If you would stablish your heart with a courageous spirit and with a firm resolve to please God, be a man of prayer. In short, would you root out vices, and be filled with virtues, be a man of prayer. For therein is received the unction of the Holy Spirit, which teaches the soul all things. Would you mount even to contemplation, and enjoy the embraces of the Spouse, be a man of prayer. For to that degree of contemplation and taste of heavenly things prayer alone can conduct us. You see, then, how great is the power and virtue of prayer. In confirmation of what I have said, without adducing the many testimonies of Scripture, it will serve for a convincing proof, the fact that we daily hear and see persons illiterate and simple who have obtained those blessings of which we have spoken, and many more, by the virtue of prayer. Those all ought to lead lives of prayer who desire to imitate Christ, and particularly religious persons, who should have more leisure for this purpose. Wherefore I exhort you, and, had I the power, would mostly enjoin upon you, that you should make prayer the principal business of your life, of course after the proper duties of your state have been discharged. Let prayer be your chief delight; for nothing else ought to delight you so much as to dwell with your Lord, which you do through prayer. But that you may enjoy the benefit of a better counsellor, hear the honeyed words which flow from S. Bernard on that subject. For he says, “Those who are in the habit of

frequent prayer, know experimentally what I say. Oftentimes we approach the altar with lukewarm and dry hearts; we apply ourselves to prayer, and persevering therein, presently grace is infused, our affections are nourished with richness, a very inundation of devotion pervades our whole being, as if the breasts were distended with such a sweetness, that it could not but overflow to all around.” Again, at the beginning of Lent, S. Bernard says, “As often as I treat of prayer, certain words of human thoughts I seem to hear in my heart. For how is it that, though we never cease from prayer, we seem hardly ever, any of us, to experience the fruits of prayer? As we go to prayer, so we seem to return from it; and no one answers us a word, no one grants us anything. But follow the judgment of faith, and not of feeling. Faith is true: but feeling, fallacious. What, then, is the truth of faith, but what the Son of God promised, saying, ‘What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them’? Let none of you, brethren, think lightly of prayer; for I say unto you, that He to whom we pray does not so regard it. Before it has gone forth from our mouth, He orders it to be inscribed above. And one of two things we can unhesitatingly hope for, that either He will grant what we ask, or what He knows will be more useful to us. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but He has pity on our ignorance, and graciously receiving our prayer, does not grant that which would by no means be profitable for us, or at least would not be so at present. However, our prayer can never be fruitless, if we only do what the Psalmist bids us: ‘Delight thou in the Lord, and He shall give thee thy heart’s desire.’ ” And a little afterwards, “But consider, that He calls that ‘the desires of the heart’ which the judgment of reason approves. Nor have you cause to complain, but rather every reason to give thanks with your whole heart, that so great is the care of your God for you, that so often as you ask what is unprofitable to you, He does not grant it, but puts in its stead some better gift. As an earthly father readily gives a child bread when he asks for it; but if he asks for a knife which the father thinks he had better not have, he does not give it him, but breaks the bread himself. Admit, then, that the desires of the heart may be summed up in these three kinds, nor can I see what else there is which the child of God ought to seek. Two, indeed, concern this present life, namely, the goods of the body, and the goods of the soul; the third, is the blessedness of eternal life. Do not marvel that I affirm that the goods of the body are to be sought

from God; since bodily goods are as much His as goods of the soul. And, therefore, we should seek and expect to obtain from Him whatever is needful to sustain us in His service. Nevertheless, the necessities of the soul must be more frequently and more fervently prayed for; that is, for obtaining the grace of God and the virtues of the soul. Thus, too, we must pray most earnestly and with all our hearts for eternal life, when our blessedness will be full and perfect, both of body and soul.” And again, “Let the prayer which is offered for temporal things be confined to what is necessary only. Let the prayer which is for the virtues of the soul be free from all impurity of aim, and intent upon the will of God alone. Let that which is for eternal life be offered with all humility, leaning only on the mercy of God.” Again, “He who would pray aright, must observe not only the place but the time. Holy seasons are certainly the most fitting; and especially when the profound stillness of night reigns around, then plainly prayer can be breathed forth most free and pure. ‘Arise,’ says Jeremiah, ‘cry out in the night; in the beginning of the watches; pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord,’ How securely in the night prayer ascends, God alone beholding, and the Holy Angel who waits to present it at the heavenly altar! How grateful it is and bright—tinted, as it were, with the hue of bashful modesty! How quiet and calm is it, disturbed by no noise or sound! In short, how pure and untainted, sullied by no dust of worldly anxiety, tried by no glance of praise or breath of flattery! Therefore was it that the spouse withdrew to her secret chamber, and at night, bashfully and prudently, to pray; that is, to seek the Word, for it is one and the same thing. Otherwise, you would not pray aright, if in prayer you sought anything besides the Word, or if you sought it not on His account; for all things are in Him. In Him are the remedies of our wounds; in Him, supplies for our necessities; in Him, the repairs of our defects; in Him, abundance for our progress; in Him, in a word, all find whatever is needful for them to have, whatever is becoming or fit. It is needless, then, to seek for anything apart from the Word, since He is all. For even these temporal things which at times we seem so familiarly to ask when there is necessity, if we ask them, as indeed is right, for the sake of the Word, we seek not so much them as the Word, on account of Whom we ask them.” Thus far S. Bernard. Now you have heard the most beautiful words of S. Bernard, in his highest flights of contemplation, tasting, according to his gift, the sweetness of prayer.

Reflect on what he says, that you, too, may taste something of that sweetness; for it is for this purpose I gladly in this little Work insert his words from time to time, because they are not only spiritual and affective, but also full of beauty, and excite us powerfully to the service of God. For he was, indeed, most eloquent, and full of the spirit of wisdom, and eminent in sanctity. May you be drawn to imitate him, and put into practice his advice and sayings, for this is my reason for so often setting him before you.

But let us return to the Lord Jesus. While, then, our Lord was praying on the mountain, the disciples were in great distress and dismay upon the sea; for the wind was contrary to them, and the ship was tossed by the winds and waves. Behold them, then, with pity, for they are in much anxiety and distress. For the tempest raged against them, and it was night, and they were without their Lord. But in the fourth watch of the night, the Lord came down from the mountain and came near to them, walking on the sea. Behold Him, then, here as your God, and see how, wearied with long watching and long prayer, He comes down the steep and, it may be, rugged mountain, perhaps barefoot, and how He walks upon the sea with firm step as on land. Thus the creature seemed to recognize the Creator. But when He drew near to the ship, the disciples were afraid and cried out, thinking Him to be a spectre; but the gracious Lord, unwilling that they should be any longer terrified, reassured them, saying, "It is I; be not afraid." Then Peter, confident in the power of the Lord, and at His bidding, began himself to walk on the sea; but tottering, he soon began to sink, when the Right Hand of the Lord upheld him, and kept him from sinking. On this passage the old commentary says, "The Lord bade him walk upon the sea, that he might manifest His Divine power; He permitted him to sink, lest he should be unmindful of his own weakness, lest he should feel himself to be equal with God and become proud." But upon the Lord entering the ship the storm ceased, and all became calm. And the disciples reverently received Him, and rejoiced greatly, and remained in perfect tranquillity. Behold Him, then, attentively, and the disciples also, in the circumstances which I have related, for they are beautiful, and afford matter for devout meditation. From this deed, then, you may draw the moral consideration that our Lord acts thus with us daily in a spiritual manner; He suffers and permits His elect to be afflicted in this world, both inwardly and outwardly, for He "scourgeth

every son whom He receiveth.” For those who are without discipline are not sons, as the Apostle says, but bastards. It is, indeed, good for us to undergo trial and affliction here, for we are thereby taught, and gain virtues, and preserve those we have already acquired, and, what is more, we lay up future and eternal rewards thereby. And, therefore, we ought not to be broken in spirit by tribulations, or become impatient, but rather to love and value them. But because the great use of afflictions is unknown to many, they deem them, therefore, hard and insupportable. That you, however, may be well instructed on this matter, and may bear them patiently, I, as usual, bring forward the words of S. Bernard as an authority. He says, “Tribulation is useful, for it works out our probation, and leads to glory. ‘I am with him,’ says the Psalmist, ‘in trouble,’ etc. Let us, then, give thanks to the Father of mercies, Who is with us in trouble, and ‘comforteth us in all our tribulation.’ For, I have said, tribulation is a necessary thing, and is converted into glory and changed into joy—joy, indeed, long, which no one may take from us, a great joy, a full joy. Tribulation is necessary, and it is a necessity which brings us our crown. Let us not, then, despise it, brethren; the seed is small, but great are the fruits which spring from it. Perhaps it is tasteless, perhaps bitter; perhaps it is like a grain of mustard seed. We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen in it. For the things which are seen are temporal, the things which are not seen are eternal.” And again, “ ‘I am with him in trouble,’ saith the Lord, and I will seek for no other merit than tribulation. ‘It is good for me to hold me fast by God.’ But not only so, but also ‘to put my trust in the Lord God,’ for ‘I will deliver him and bring him to honour; yea, I am with him in trouble.’ ‘My delights,’ he says, ‘are with the sons of men.’ He came down to earth, that He might be nigh unto those who are of a contrite heart, that He might be with us in our tribulation. But there shall be a time when we shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord, provided that, however, we are in the meanwhile careful to have Him with us now. It is good for me, O Lord, to be in trouble, if only Thou Thyself art with me; rather than to reign without Thee, to feast without Thee, to glory without Thee. ‘The furnace proveth the potter’s vessels, and tribulation tries the just.’ Why do we fear? Why do we hesitate? Why do we shrink from this furnace? Does the fire rage?—but the Lord is with us in tribulation. If God be with us, who can be against us? If

He wills to deliver us, who is there who shall take us out of His hand? Lastly, if He glorify us, who shall humble us?" Again S. Bernard says, "Not only, then, in hope, but in tribulation we glory. 'Most gladly, therefore,' says S. Paul, 'will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.' That infirmity is to be desired which is compensated by the power of Christ, Who will grant me not only to be weak, but to faint and fail as far as myself is concerned, so that I may be strengthened by the power of the Lord of Hosts. For His 'strength is made perfect in weakness.' Lastly, he says, 'When I am weak, then am I strong.' " Again the same writer says, "It is on this account that the Spouse in the Canticles calls the Beloved not a bundle, but a little bundle, because she regards as light everything which is done or suffered for love of Him. Truly, a little bundle; for unto us a Little Child is born. Truly, a little bundle; for 'the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For our light affliction,' he says, 'which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' That, then, shall one day be to us a huge pile of glory, which is now but a little bundle of myrrh. Is not that a little bundle, of which it is said the 'yoke is easy and burden light'? Not, remember, that it is light in itself, for the bitterness of death is no light trial, but a severe one; but it is light to him who loves." Again, S. Bernard says on the words, "For the arrow that flieth by day," "If we are minded to look at the whole body of the Church, we may easily observe that spiritual men are far more fiercely attacked than carnal. This truly is the work of proud and envious malice, which always assails more violently the most perfect, according to these words, 'His meat is choice.' Nay, it is, in a certain way, a dispensation of Divine Providence, that the imperfect should not be tempted above that they are able to bear, but with the temptation have a way to escape; and that the perfect should achieve not only more glorious, but more numerous triumphs over the enemy." And a little further on he says, "With far greater anxiety and redoubled cunning does the enemy strive to wound us on the right side than on the left, for it is not so much the substance of the body as the life of the soul which he labours to undermine." And again, below this, he adds, "We must direct all our resistance to those points where the pressure is most urgent, where the whole weight of the war hangs heaviest, where the entire issue of the struggle depends. Here must be decided the question, whether

we shall be conquered and reduced to an ignominious slavery, or conquer and be crowned with glory and triumph.” And again, “This is the favour and mercy of God towards His servants, and His regard for His elect, that whilst He feigns for a while to be unmindful of their left wing, He always stands by and protects the right. Hence it is the prophet’s testimony, ‘I have set God always before me; for He is on my right hand, therefore I shall not fail.’ ” And again S. Bernard says, “Would that Thou wert always on my right hand, good Jesus; and that Thou didst always hold me by it. For I know and am certain that no adversity shall hurt me, if no iniquity reigns over me. Let me be cut and beaten on my left, attacked with violence, covered with reproach, I will willingly endure it; if only during it I am upheld by Thee, and Thou Thyself art my defence upon my right hand.” Again, “It is one thing to be prompted by virtue, another to be governed by reason; it is one thing to be ruled by virtue, another to be delighted with sweetness. For though wisdom is powerful, and virtue sweet, yet—to use words rightly—power characterizes virtue, and calmness of mind, accompanied with a certain spiritual sweetness, appertains to wisdom. This, I believe, the Apostle meant, when, after much exhortation respecting virtue, he added, that wisdom consists in sweetness in the Holy Ghost. To resist, therefore, to meet violence by counter violence, is that which belongs especially to virtue, is an honour, but it is also a toil. For it is not the same thing to defend your honour with labour, and to possess it in peace. It is one thing to be actuated by virtue, another to enjoy the practice of it. Whatever virtue acquires by labour, wisdom enjoys; and what wisdom enjoins and settles, virtue manages and brings to pass. ‘The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure,’ says the Wise Man; the leisure, therefore, of wisdom promotes business, and the more there is of leisure, the more opportunity there is for business in its proper sphere. On the other hand, virtue shines with a greater lustre the more it is exercised, and the proof of its excellence lies in the amount of toil it can undergo. And if any one should define wisdom to be the love of virtue, I do not think that he would be far off the mark. But where love is, labour is not, but sweetness. And perhaps the word for wisdom in Latin is derived from a word which signifies a relish, implying, as a kind of quality or accidental accompaniment of virtue, a sort of sweetness which is imported into that which otherwise would be insipid or bitter. Neither should I quarrel with

any one who defined wisdom a taste for good.” And further on the same writer proceeds, “Therefore it is the part of virtue to bear trials bravely; of wisdom, to find a joy in them. To wait on the Lord and be of a good courage, belongs to virtue; to taste and see how gracious the Lord is, appertains to wisdom. And that both may be the better known by the types of character which are produced by them; modesty of mind is a proof of wisdom; constancy marks the man of virtue. And well is it that wisdom should come after virtue, for virtue is as it were a firm foundation, upon which wisdom builds for herself a house.”

Again, “Happy is the man who accepts the sufferings of his body for righteousness’ sake, and is willing to suffer all for the Son of God; without repining in his heart, and with thanksgiving and praise upon his lips. He who thus exults, is the one who takes up his bed and goes into his house. Our bed is our body, in which before we lay languishing, serving our desires and lusts. We carry it, when we make it obey the spirit.” Again, “Truly manifold is the Spirit, who in such manifold ways inspires the sons of men, that there is no one that is hidden from the heat thereof. He is given to them for use, for miracles, for salvation, for help, for solace, for fervour. For the use of life, indeed, He gives both to good and bad, to unworthy and worthy alike, all benefits abundantly, so that He hardly seems to observe any rule of discrimination. He would be ungrateful, who did not recognize in these things the benefits of the Spirit. As to miracles, in signs, wonders, and various mighty works which were wrought by the hands of some, He was present. It was He who worked so many miracles in days of old, and who fortifies our faith in the present by memories of the past. But because to some even this is bestowed without avail to themselves, He in the third place infuses the grace of salvation, the effect of which is, that we turn with all our heart to the Lord our God. Further, the Spirit is given for help, when He ‘helpeth our infirmities’ in all our struggles. And when the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, that inspiration is for consolation. He is also given for fervour, when in the hearts of the perfect, breathing with more of vehemency, He enkindles a strong flame of charity, so that we not only rejoice in the hope of the glory of the sons of God, but also in tribulations, deeming reproach glory, disgrace joy, contempt exultation. To all of us, lest I am deceived, the Spirit is given for salvation; but not to all for fervour. For there are but few who are filled with this

Spirit, few who strive earnestly to attain spiritual excellence. We are content with our narrowness, neither do we aspire to liberty, nor ever, perhaps, desire it.”

Thus you have seen, then, with how many and beautiful reasons, and with what surpassing eloquence, S. Bernard proves to us the advantage of trials. Do not marvel, then, if the Lord permits His own disciples, whom He so greatly loved, to be tossed with tempests, seeing the advantage which they would gain thereby. For several times it is related that their boat was violently beaten by waves and contrary winds, but it was never overwhelmed by them. Learn, then, to turn to account these lessons, and so to establish and direct your heart, that in all adverse events, and oppositions of whatever kind, you may bear yourself patiently and joyfully, and so diligently walk in the path of the Spirit, that, being filled with fervour, you may even desire tribulation for the love of the Lord Jesus, who in His own case, and that of His disciples, has held and pointed out this exalted way.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Concerning the Healing of the Daughter of the Canaanite, and how the Angels faithfully minister to us

WHEN the Lord Jesus was in the midst of His labours, preaching and healing the sick, there came to Him a woman of Canaan, that is, of the land of Canaan, who was of the race of the Gentiles and not of the Jews, praying Him to deliver her daughter, who was vexed with a devil. For she had faith in Him, that He could do this. And though our Lord made no answer, she still urged her request, and persevered in crying after Him, and seeking from Him this act of mercy, so that the disciples joined their entreaty with hers. And when the Lord answered, that it was not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs, she, humbling herself, replied, that at least, like the dogs, she might eat of the crumbs, and thus she was thought worthy to be heard.

Behold here our Lord and His disciples at this occurrence, and refer to the general method of meditation which has been already suggested. However, consider the three chief virtues which this woman manifested, and bring the whole matter to bear on your own spiritual life. The first was her great faith, which even extended itself to her daughter, and for which she was especially commended by our Lord. The second was her perseverance in prayer, which was not only persevering but also importunate. And this importunity was acceptable to our Lord, and called forth by Him, as I have clearly shown in a former chapter. The third was her deep lowliness, for she declined not to be likened to a dog, nor deemed herself worthy to be reckoned among the children, or to receive a piece of

bread, but was content to have crumbs only. Wherefore she greatly humbled herself, and thus what she asked for she obtained. In the same way you may most surely believe, if, with a sincere, faithful, and pure heart, with persevering prayer, you humble yourself before God, counting yourself unworthy of any good thing, that you also shall obtain whatever you ask. And as the Apostles prayed for the Canaanite, so, too, shall your angel be interested in your behalf, and bring your prayer before God. Upon which subject hear what S. Bernard has to say: “When my soul has been often sighing after God, yea, praying without ceasing, and consuming itself with desire, and the Beloved, after being so longed for, mercifully condescended to manifest Himself, I have thought that the words of Jeremiah might express my own experience, ‘The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him.’ Nay, the very angel, one of the companions of the Spouse, to whom it deputed the office of attending on and assisting at this secret and mutual salutation—this angel, I say, how does he with exultation and congratulatory joy turn to the Lord and say, ‘I give Thee thanks, O Lord of Majesty, because Thou hast given him his heart’s desire, and hast not denied him the request of his lips.’ He it is who in every place assiduously waits upon the soul, ever following it as a faithful attendant, and never ceasing to admonish it by continual suggestions; saying, ‘Delight thou in the Lord, and He shall give thee thy heart’s desire.’ And again, ‘Wait for the Lord, and keep His way.’ ‘Though He tarry, wait for Him; because He will surely come, He will not tarry.’ But to our Lord he says, ‘Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God.’ My soul hath desired Thee in the night, and Thy Spirit is within the recesses of my heart. She hath sought Thee early. And again, all the day long hath she stretched forth her hands unto Thee. ‘Send her away, for she crieth after Thee.’ Turn Thee a little, and be gracious. Look down from heaven, behold and visit thy desolate servant. The faithful friend of the bridegroom who is conscious, but without envy, of this mutual love, seeks not anything for self, but only the glory of the Lord. He passes, as it were, between the bridegroom and the bride, offering her vows, and bringing back gifts, calling out her love, and moving His pity. Sometimes also, although rarely, he seems to introduce them to each other, either attracting her, or inviting Him. For indeed he is a well-known attendant in the Heavenly

Court, and fears not repulse, seeing that he daily beholds the Father's face." Thus far S. Bernard.

You see how faithfully our angels wait upon us; and I take this opportunity of saying more on this subject. I wish you to know that we ought to have great reverence for them, and daily praise and honour them; and we are bound to render God thanks for their continual presence with us, and to keep ourselves from everything wrong or shameful, either in thought, word, or deed. Concerning this, S. Bernard admonishes us, when he says, on the ninety-first Psalm, " 'He shall give His angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.' How should this saying fill you with reverence, affect you with devotion, and impart to you confidence—reverence on account of their presence, devotion because of their benevolence, confidence from their guardianship. Walk circumspectly when angels are in your path, for they are bidden to have charge over thee in all thy ways. In every place of retirement, and in every corner of the street, be reverently conscious of the angel's presence. Dare not do in his presence what you would not dare to do in his sight." And again S. Bernard says, "The angels are not only with you, but for you. They are with you to protect you, they are with you to help you. What should you render unto the Lord, for all the benefits that He hath done unto you? For to Him alone be the honour and glory. Why to Him alone? Because it is He who so orders it, and from Whom is every perfect gift. Nevertheless, although it is He Who gives His angels charge over us, yet it is they who with such love obey His bidding, and succour us in all our necessities. Let us, therefore, cultivate a pious and grateful spirit towards our noble guardians; let us love and honour them as much as we can and as is fitting." All we have said is in commendation of the service of the angels, their help, and the power of prayer. Keep these things in memory, and testify your reverence for the presence of the Holy Angels to the best of your power.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

How some were offended at the Words of our Lord

MARVEL not if sometimes our words and actions should cause offence, though in themselves they are not in fault; since oftentimes this happened to our Lord Himself, who could not err. Thus when, on a certain occasion, the Pharisees asked our Lord why the disciples did not wash their hands before eating bread, our Lord severely answered them, blaming them for thinking more of exterior cleanness than of interior. At which they were offended; but our Lord was not moved thereby. At another time, when He spake spiritual truths in the synagogue, some of His disciples took them in a carnal sense, not understanding them, and consequently withdrew themselves from Him. Whereupon, turning to the twelve disciples, he said, “Will ye also go away?” And Peter said for himself and for the rest, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” Contemplate our Lord, then, on these occasions, and on similar ones, how He spake with power, and taught the truth, not paying account to the offence of the corrupt and foolish. It should, therefore, first be noted, that we ought not to shrink from that which is just and right, because what we say or do may be made a ground of offence. Secondly, that concerning inward purity we should be more careful than outward cleanliness, which our Lord more expressly teaches elsewhere in S. Luke,—how we should live in the spirit; so that the words of Christ should not seem strange to us, as they did to those disciples who, according to S. John, could not bear the saying, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man,” etc., but went back. On the contrary, let us rather acknowledge them as the words of eternal life, that, together with the Twelve, we may perfectly imitate Him.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Concerning the Reward of those who forsake All

WHEN the faithful and prudent disciple Simon Peter questioned the Lord Jesus concerning the reward which himself and his companions would receive, our Lord answered, amongst other things, that they who had forsaken all to follow Him, should receive an hundred-fold in this life, and in the world to come, eternal life. Mark well this reward, and rejoice greatly and give thanks and praise to the Lord with your whole heart, for that He hath called you to such an enterprise in which you can gain an hundred, as it were, for every pound, and beyond that, eternal life. But this hundred-fold is of spiritual goods, not material; namely, of interior consolations and virtues, which we know by our own experience, not by instruction. For when the soul delights in the perfume of poverty, the pure charm of chastity, of patience and other graces, and has a relish for them, does it not seem to you to receive an hundred-fold? And if we ascend higher, and know what it is to receive a visit from the Spouse, and to exult in His presence, do we not then gain a thousand-fold for all, whatever it may have been, and however disposed of, which had been renounced for Him? You see how true, then, is that which the Truth speaks, and that He fails not to render a hundred-fold in this life, not only once but many times, to the soul which is devoted to Him; so that not only what has been actually forsaken, but even the whole world is counted as dung, by the soul which seeks to win the Spouse. But that you may be still more fully instructed concerning the hundred-fold, hear S. Bernard upon it: “If perchance some person of the world should say, ‘Show me this hundredfold which you promise, and I will willingly give up all.’ But what have I to show him? For faith hath no worth, when it rests

only on the proof of human reason. Will you, then, believe a man showing, rather than the Truth promising? You err by trying to examine that which is too deep for scrutiny. ‘Unless you believe, you will not understand.’ The manna is hidden, which, in the Book of the Revelation of S. John, is promised to him that overcometh; a ‘new name which no man knoweth but he who receives it.’ ” Then, again, he continues, “Does he not possess all things, to whom all things work together for good? Hath he not the hundred-fold of all, who is filled with the Holy Spirit, who hath Christ in his heart? Hath he not much more than an hundred-fold, who hath the visitation of the Spirit, the Comforter, and the presence of Christ? O Lord, how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee, and which Thou hast wrought for them that hope in Thee! See, how the holy soul breaks forth with the remembrance of the abundant sweetness, and labours to express it by multiplying words. ‘How great,’ he says, ‘is the multitude!’ This ‘hundred-fold,’ then, is the adoption of sons, the freedom and firstfruits of the spirit of a delicious charity, the glory of conscience, the kingdom of God which is within us. Not, indeed, ‘meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.’ Joy, truly, not only in the hope of future glory, but also amid present trial. This is the fire which Christ willed that it should be vehemently kindled. This is the virtue which made an Andrew embrace the cross, a Lawrence despise his executioners, a Stephen, at his death, pray for those who stoned him. This is that peace which Christ left to his own, when He gave it as His peace; for ‘grace and mercy is to His saints’—the peace, indeed, of the Father, and the pledge of future glory. This peace passeth all understanding; and whatever there is of pleasure under the sun, whatever to be desired in this world, can bear no comparison to it. This is the grace of devotion, and the unction which knoweth all things, which whoso experienceth, knoweth; and whoso hath not experienced, knoweth not: which none can know, except he hath received it.” Thus far S. Bernard. Rejoice, then, and be glad, as I have said, and give thanks, in that you are called to receive this “hundred-fold,” and often to enter this paradise, which you may make your own by living a life of prayer.

CHAPTER XL

How the Lord sought from His Disciples what Men said concerning Him

THE Lord Jesus, having come into the parts of Cæsarea Philippi, asked His disciples what was said of Himself; and also what they themselves thought Him to be, and about other things. And when they answered, some say this, and some that; then Peter for himself and the rest replied, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Our Lord then said to him, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church,” etc. And then He gave him, for themselves and their successors, the keys for binding and loosing upon earth. Contemplate him, then, and the other disciples according to the method which I have before suggested to you. And note, that this Peter whom our Lord had just so greatly magnified, a little after was called by Him “Satan,” when, from a too natural love which he bore for Christ, he would have dissuaded Him from undergoing His Passion. And thus do you, after the example of your Lord, hold all for enemies, who, for the sake of avoiding bodily pain or discomfort, would turn you from the path of duty and the pursuit of spiritual good.

CHAPTER XLI

Of the Transfiguration of our Lord on the Mount

THE Lord Jesus, having taken with Him three of His disciples, ascended Mount Tabor, and was transfigured before them, showing Himself to them in His glory. And there appeared Moses and Elias, and they spake of His future Passion. They said (may we imagine), “Lord, it doth not behove Thee to die, for one drop of Thy Blood would be enough to redeem the world.” But the Lord Jesus answered, “The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep, and so I ought to die.” The Holy Spirit, too, was present there, under the appearance of a bright cloud, and the Voice of the Father was heard in the cloud, saying, “This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear Him.” Whereupon the disciples fell to the ground; and when they were aroused they saw no man, but Jesus only. Consider every point of this mystery, and place yourself in spirit on the Mount, and behold this glorious sight.

CHAPTER XLII

How the Buyers and Sellers were cast out of the Temple

TWICE did the Lord Jesus cast out the buyers and sellers from the Temple, an act which is reckoned among His great miracles. For although at other times they set Him at nought, yet then they all fled before Him. And notwithstanding they were many, they did not make a stand, but suffered Him alone, with a scourge of small cord, to drive them out. And this He was able to do, because there was a look of Divine greatness in His face which terrified them. For His zeal was vehemently kindled at seeing His Father so dishonoured by them, especially in the place where He should most be honoured, that He on both these occasions cast them out. Behold Him, then, attentively, and compassionate Him, for His heart was full of compassionate sorrow. And yet, at the same time, excite fear of Him. Here is an especial lesson for those who are employed in the Temple of God, and occupied with sacred things, lest they should involve themselves in worldly affairs, as these did, when they ought always to seek only the Divine glory. Such persons should still fear His rejection and indignation, and fear it to some purpose. If, then, you wish to escape this tormenting fear, be careful, if you are dedicated to the especial service of God, not to entangle yourselves with the cares and business of the world. And do not occupy yourself with works which take up much time, and only minister to curiosity and worldliness.

CHAPTER XLIII

Of the Pool of Bethesda, and what happened there. Also, against Rash Judgment

THERE was in Jerusalem a certain pool, in which the sheep, which were to be offered in sacrifice, were washed. There is a story that the wood of the Cross lay hid beneath its waters. Once every year this pool was stirred by an angel, and the sick man who first stepped into the troubled waters was made whole. Therefore many sick folk waited day by day, in hope of the moving of the water. Now there was there a certain sick man, lying on a bed, who had suffered from paralysis for thirty-eight years. This man the Lord Jesus healed on the Sabbath day. Contemplate the condescension of Christ, as He goes to the afflicted man, and converses with him as was His wont. In this action, notice three things. First, see how our Lord asked the sick man whether he wished to be healed. In the same way with us; He will not save us without our consent, and sinners are inexcusable who will not consent to the will of the Lord, and to be saved. For S. Augustine says, "He who created thee without thee, will not justify thee without thee." Secondly, we ought to beware lest we fall away from our Lord; for if, after we are healed, we relapse into sin, we shall deserve to be treated with greater severity on account of our ingratitude, as our Lord said to this man, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." Thirdly, consider that the wicked make everything an occasion of evil, whilst the good turn everything to good. For when this man, having recovered the use of his limbs, began to carry his bed, and the Jews said to him that it was not lawful to carry his bed on the Sabbath day, he replied, "He that made me whole, the same said to me, Take up thy bed and walk." They did not say, Who is he that made thee whole? They only laid hold of that which they could find fault with, and left

out that which they might have praised. This is ever the way with carnal men, who interpret everything in a bad sense, and thus lose every opportunity of spiritual profit. But those who are spiritual refer everything to the praise of God, whether it be prosperous or adverse; and never question the good Providence of God, Who orders all things rightly, and permits all things justly, for they see all things in the best light; according to the teaching of S. Bernard, who says, “Beware of becoming a curious inquirer into the conduct of other men, or a rash judge of it. Even should you see him do a wrong act, do not judge your neighbour. But rather excuse the motive, if you cannot excuse the act; impute it to ignorance, unguardedness, or accident. But if the matter be so clearly wrong that you can give no other account of it, nevertheless bring yourself into the mind to say, ‘It was from too strong a temptation. What would have happened to me, had I been exposed to the same?’ ” Thus far S. Bernard. But that spiritually-minded persons make all things to turn to their profit, even their own and other’s sins, and hurtful things, and even works of the Devil, S. Bernard thus teaches: “Though the irrational and animal life is not able to attain to spiritual things, yet by the bodily service which it renders it may greatly contribute towards obtaining them, in the case of those who turn all temporal things to eternal profit by the use which they make of them,—using this world, as not abusing it.” And some way further on, the Saint says, “Though there are some animals which in their use are found troublesome and even hurtful, and destructive as to the life and property of man; yet have they their end, and can be made to work together for good to those who, according to His purpose, are called to be saints; and if they are of no use for food, or for work, they may be of service at least by calling into exercise their minds in ways of discipline, through Him who is ever at hand to help those who rightly employ their reason, by means of which the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. For the Devil and his ministers, ever malignant in will, ever desirous of hurting; if we be but zealous followers of that which is good, will rather aid us than hurt us, and thus in spite of themselves work together for good to those who are good.”

And again, “There are beings who make for good without willing it; there is the wicked man, there is the bad angel; and it is evident that the good which is wrought by them is not to their account, for good cannot be done

against our own will. They are only the appointed means of good to others; and the good which we may gain through a wicked instrumentality is good only in so far forth as it reaches us. This is the reason why God, by the ministry of the evil, works good to the good; and it is not because He has any need of their agency.” Again, “Dust and ashes, why art thou proud? The Lord, even in the angels, abominates pride. Therefore let the rejection of angels be a lesson to man. For it is written for their punishment, ‘that the evil of the Devil should work together with me for good, and that I wash my hands in the blood of the ungodly.’ How, askest thou? Hear. Certainly, on the pride of the Devil a horrible and terrible curse is hurled.” And further on, S. Bernard says, “If such judgment befell an angel, what shall become of dust and ashes? He in heaven was proud; but I on a dunghill. Who does not find pride less bearable in a poor man than in one who is rich? Alas! if so severe was the penalty of one high and powerful, what shall happen to me, so low, so miserable, and yet so proud?” For S. Bernard, speaking of the spouse, the Church, which, after many faults, came to the Lord, for she was composed of Gentiles, worshippers of idols—a fact which the Synagogue made a ground of reproach, but which she thus turned to account—“she,” said he, “who was forgiven much, and who loved much, turned to her advantage the very scorn which her rival at the feast cast upon her; she became more meek on account of reprimand, more patient in labour, more ardent in love, more wise in caution, more humble in conscience, more acceptable for bashfulness, more ready to obedience, more devout and diligent in thanksgiving.” Thus S. Bernard.

See, then, how spiritual men interpret everything in good part, and turn all to good account. Be, therefore, like them, and make a gain of all that happens. The consideration of this will strengthen you to bear trial and temptation with tranquillity of mind. For, by daily discipline, we can arrive at such a degree of mental repose, that hardly anything shall be able to disturb us, and the saying of the Wise Man shall be found true in your case, “Whatsoever shall happen to the just, it shall not sadden him.”

CHAPTER XLIV

How the Disciples of Christ plucked the ears of Corn. Also of Poverty

THE disciples of the Lord Jesus, on a certain Sabbath day being hungry, and having no food at hand, passed through some fields in which there was corn, and, plucking the ears of wheat, rubbed them between their hands, and did eat. But the Pharisees reproached them, saying, that it was not lawful to do this on the Sabbath. The Lord, however, defended them, and did Himself many things on the Sabbath day, as I have before said when treating of the man who had a withered hand. Behold, then, His disciples, and pity them, placed, as they were, in such a strait, although they did this act in a gleeful spirit from their love of poverty, which their Lord and Master had commanded in the first of the Beatitudes. What a spectacle is this! The princes of the world, in the presence of its Creator, reduced to such a degree of want, that they were obliged to take nourishment after the manner of the cattle, to sustain life! The Lord regarded them with a look of deep compassion, because He loved them most tenderly. And yet He rejoiced, both for their sakes when He thought of the question of their future reward, and on our account, because such a fair example was thus left to us. In this example, we may find a lesson from many virtues. Here, poverty shines forth brilliantly; here, the pomp of the world is openly despised; here, extravagance, luxury, gluttony, effeminacy, greed, are completely overthrown. Observe, then, this example, and embrace the virtues it sets forth with your whole heart. In our Lord, in His mother, in His disciples, the princes of the world, in all who have striven to imitate them perfectly,—detachment from the things of time and sense has been a characteristic virtue.

But give attention to the kind of poverty of which I speak. There are those who separate themselves externally from all possessions, and bind themselves not to return to them. Give thanks for the grace which is given to you, and be faithful to Him that calleth you. But I go deeper than this: though the one rightly should involve the other, external poverty is of no value without internal. I speak of poverty of spirit, for virtues have their roots in the soul, not in outward actions. No outward observance of poverty is of avail without detachment of heart. For if you are empty externally only, and full within, and do not mortify your desires and sensual appetites, but crave their indulgence, your life is not one of true poverty, but of misery. Such a life is without virtue and reward; it is a laborious and fruitless dissatisfaction. For evil desire with consent is sufficient to destroy all moral worth, and constitutes sin. Do not suppose that, with such a state of heart, you can rise up to prayer or contemplation, or receive the hundred-fold reward. How can you draw near to the purity of God and of Heaven, when you are polluted and grimed with the mire and filth of earth? Therefore love to be poor in spirit, and detached from earthly possessions; let the beauty of such poverty be dear to you and attract you. Keep the form of it perfect, and yield not to the desire of unnecessary things.

If you ask, "What is necessary?" I reply, that which you cannot do without. But even if you renounce all, not only in spirit, but in act, your poverty will fall far short of that of Jesus Christ, and will bear no comparison with it. His poverty was one of contrast, for He was rich and the Lord of all, and He assumed voluntarily a form of poverty which involved not only want, but contempt. Those who give up all become oftentimes honourable in the eyes of others, on account of their unselfishness; but Christ's poverty, though it was of all the most voluntary, yet was it not so understood at the time, and therefore it brought Him nothing but shame and reproach. When He was seen by all, to be without home, without possessions, without any resource whatever, He was all the more despised. The poor, alas, are often trodden down by the world; let us be careful that we do not despise those who in a special sense represent the Lord. That it is desirable for us to become, at least in spirit, like our Lord in this matter, let us hear what S. Bernard says thereon: "Let us imitate as much as we can Him who so loved poverty, that, although He held the ends of the earth in His hand, yet had He not where to lay His Head; so that His

disciples, we read, were so pressed with hunger that they rubbed the ears of corn with their hands and eat them, as they passed through the field.” And again, “Why should the Saviour, who possessed all riches, make poverty sacred in His own body? Why does this poverty occupy so conspicuous a place in the Angel’s message? ‘This,’ said he, ‘shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes.’ Yes, Lord Jesu, the swaddling clothes are placed for a sign; but for a sign which, by many to this day, shall be spoken against. This is given to us for an example, that we should do the same.” And further on, the same writer says, “In our conflict a breastplate of iron is more useful than a linen garment; although the one is burdensome, and the other is honourable.” And again, “It is a great and intolerable abuse, that a vile worm should wish to be rich, for whose sake the God of Glory, the Lord of Hosts, willed to become poor.” And in another place, S. Bernard says, “It is not poverty which is estimated a virtue, it is the affection toward it and the spirit of it.” “The friendship of the poor makes friends of kings; but poverty makes us kings, for to the poor ‘is the kingdom of heaven.’ ” And below, “Blessed is he who is not attached to goods, the possession of which is an anxiety; the affection for which, a stain; the loss of which, a torture.”

From the example, then, of the Apostles, the authority of S. Bernard, and what he has said on the Nativity of our Lord, and the Sermon on the Mount, you will have now learnt, that to be poor in spirit is a very great virtue.

But of abstinence and against gluttony what shall we say? We have in this respect much to learn from this act of the disciples. Although this is not my principal point, yet for your advantage I must treat thereof, that the nature of the virtues may be the better known, and that you may be able to imitate them in their great Exemplar.

Gluttony, then, must be avoided, and war against it carried on unremittingly. Much, indeed, has been written on this subject by those who are masters of that warfare. Hear again S. Bernard: “Whence comes this pusillanimity, this miserable slavery, that a noble creature, capable of Eternal Bliss, and of glorifying God, by whose inspiration he was created, signed with His likeness, redeemed with His Blood, gifted with faith, adopted through the Spirit, is not ashamed of becoming the wretched slave of the appetites of this corruptible body? Ah, indeed! It seems incomprehensible that such a Heavenly Love should be forsaken for such

vile affections!” And again, “It is an insane labour to abandon the care of the heart, and to be occupied with the desires of the flesh, to fatten that which so soon will become a corpse, and without doubt be the food of the worm.”

You see how gluttony is a vice to be resisted, though we may take what is necessary for the body and for health. “The only thing which is of importance to the body is health, and it is our duty to it to be careful to preserve it. Nothing more is wanted in regard to it, no fruits can be gained from it, and its end is death.” And again, “If the body is made subservient to pleasure, and not to health, this is not in accordance with the law of nature, but beneath it; and when pleasure gains the mastery over it, death is soon at hand. Hence it is, when this principle of pleasure is the ruling one, that so many descend to, or rather fall into, excesses, like animals (or worse than they), and eat and drink not only without care for their health, but with the certain knowledge that their self-indulgence will entail much acute and wearisome sufferings.”

“As the need of the body is health, so the need of the soul is purity; for the troubled eye cannot see God, and the human heart is made for this, that it should contemplate its Maker. But if care is required to keep the body in health, much more anxiety should be expended on preserving purity of soul, since it is the superior part of our being.” “If you are particular in choice of food, in accordance with the advice of the physician, you are not to blame for the care of your own body, for no one hateth his own flesh.” However, such a care may be carried to too great a length, and be practised when the call for it has ceased. We ought not so to bind ourselves to such rules, as at last to live artificially. “Beware that the Master’s sentence condemn not this wisdom of the flesh, by which pleasure degenerates into luxury, and health becomes a pretext for superfluities.” “What profit is there in abstaining from pleasures, and yet spending your time in seeking, by changes of food and delicacy of preparation, to supply your needs on the ground that this or that is injurious, and produces bad effects? Think, I pray you, of your repose, of the toil of servants, of the expense of the house, of your conscience. I will not say yours, but, at least, of the conscience of others, who are witnesses of your extravagance and self-indulgence. All this becomes a scandal, a piece of hypocrisy, a veiled form of selfishness.” “In vain is S. Paul quoted to authorize this gratification, because he bade his

disciple take a little wine for his stomach's sake, and his often infirmities. They should at first remark—who would shelter their excesses under this permission—that it was not the Apostle's own practice, nor did the disciple ask this thing. He advised it in the case of Timothy, who was a Bishop, and whose life was extremely necessary for the Church still in its infancy. Such was Timothy, and give me another Timothy, and then he may, if he be in the same circumstances, have gold for food if you like, and drink of balm. Others, through self-pity, apply what is the easier line to themselves. We should be suspicious of our judgments, when they lean to the side of indulgence. However, if you will take S. Paul's advice to yourself, apply it to the letter, and do not forget the important qualification contained in the word 'a little,'—'take a little wine.' ” Thus far S. Bernard. You learn, then, that it is a duty to take care of the health of the body, but that it must not be a matter of too anxious consideration.

But what of abstinence? Hear not me, but S. Bernard: “Spirit and flesh, fire and lukewarmness, cannot co-exist in the same dwelling: lukewarmness is especially offensive to the Lord. For if the Apostles, whilst still cleaving to the Saviour's Flesh, Who was alone holy—for it was the Body of the Holy of Holies—were unable to be filled with the Holy Spirit until Christ's departure, do you think that you, bound and tied to your flesh, which is polluted and filled with evil tendencies without number, can receive the Spirit of purity itself, unless you have striven to renounce entirely the consolations of the flesh? Doubtless, when you commence, sadness will fill your heart; but if you persevere, your sadness shall be turned into joy. Then, indeed, will your affections be purified, your will renewed, and you shall become a new creature; so that all which seemed at first hard, yea, impossible, you shall now get through with much sweetness and avidity.”

“We do not blame S. Paul, because he kept under his body and brought it into subjection, by abstaining from wine; wine too often appertains to luxury. But although the weak might take a little, in accordance with the Apostle's counsel, I will practise self-denial, lest I nourish my body too much, and therefore nourish also its vices. I will practise moderation at my repasts, lest, from being surcharged with food, I become dull in prayer, and bring upon myself the Prophet's reproach as to fulness of bread. Even water should not be gulped, but taken in proper quantity and without eagerness.” Again, “Wine and such things, delicacies, savoury meats, condiments, etc.,

do not profit the spirit, but serve the flesh and minister to greediness, unless weak health and want of appetite render such things necessary. But when the spirit begins to be reformed according to the image of its Maker, soon the flesh begins to blossom anew and to follow the renewal of the spirit, For that which delights the spirit begins also to delight the flesh, even contrary to its own sense. Moreover, in consequence of its manifold misdoings, and in punishment of its numberless sins, in thirsting after God, sometimes it strives even to outstrip its guide. Since our pleasures are not lost to us, we only transfer them from the body to the soul, from the senses to the conscience. The plainest fare may be received with a joyous contentment, for in the love of Jesus and in inward joys are true delight. Are not thousands of the poor satisfied with most simple food? It is easy and agreeable to live in a natural manner, if only we have the condiment of the love of God; if our folly would only permit us so to live. Nature, when healed, is soon at ease with that which is itself natural. Hard work hardens the nerves and strengthens the arm of the labourer; this is the effect of use, for with time habit is formed. The will in the same manner creates use; use, exercise, and thus gives strength for any kind of labour.”

The necessity of abstinence, then, is very evident. The ancient Fathers, and S. Francis and S. Clare, most carefully observed it. There are, however, limits to its exercise. S. Bernard marks three of these. First, obedience is better than sacrifice, and therefore abstinence must not be adopted in defiance of rightful authority. Secondly, it should not be practised to the prejudice of others, giving them offence, and having an appearance of singularity. Thirdly, it should not be unduly exercised to the detriment of health. “Indiscreet abstinence,” says the same writer, “is a vice, and not a virtue.” We should always avoid peculiarity, and be content to give up our own will or liking for the common good. “You take,” otherwise, “self-will for your guide, through which your conscience tells you you have committed so many offences against God. It teaches you not to yield to nature or reason, or counsel, or example.” “Know ye not that the angel of Satan is often transformed into an angel of light?” God is Wisdom, and wills to be loved not only tenderly but wisely. Wherefore the Apostle says, your service should be a “reasonable service.” The spirit of error is liable to corrupt zeal, unless zeal be accompanied with knowledge. There is no more subtle device of the enemy for taking away Divine Love out of the soul,

than to make the soul walk without prudence and reason. To persevere in practices which are forbidden, or to affect singularity, is not to preserve piety, but to forfeit it: for One hath said, “Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry.” And, “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” Singularity of conduct in a house is offensive, and produces discord. Is it not discord, a source of scruples, and the ruin of the vine which the hand of the Lord hath planted, this loss of uniformity? “Woe to him by whom the offence cometh! Woe to him who shall offend one of these little ones!” Terrible is the remainder of the verse. What, then, shall be the sharp chastisement of him who offends not one but a multitude, and a holy multitude, too? The hardest judgment he will have to bear, whoever he be.

S. Bernard says, “For those who attain to the grace of devotion, there remains a last peril, and a very fearful one—that of the demon at midday. For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. This, then, is to be feared—a certain delight which some feel in doing all things, which, if they yield to without moderation, they destroy their bodily health; and then have to give up their spiritual exercises, that they may attend to their infirmities. In order that he who runs may not fall, he needs to be illumined with the light of discretion, which is a mother of virtues, and the end of perfection. By this, we are taught to do neither too much nor too little. And this is the eighth day on which the Child was circumcised, for true discretion circumcises, as it were, our actions. He who errs by excess, needs to have his works circumcised that he may reap the fruit of them. He who errs by defect, sins by lukewarmness, and needs to bring them up to the right limit. On the same day, this Divine Infant received the Name, the Name of Salvation! And of him who is in conformity with this mystery of Circumcision, I hesitate not to say, that he is working out his salvation. Angels, before this, who know heavenly secrets, may have known it; but now first I am able trustfully to ascribe to him this name of salvation.

“But discretion is a rare bird on the earth, and its place is often supplied by obedience, exact and submissive, to the bidding of those who are set over us. Bodily mortification, when carried to excess, deprives the body of its good effect; the spirit, of its affection; our neighbour, of good example; God, of His glory; and in all these respects renders us guilty towards God. The body—the members of which have been the servants of

unrighteousness—may be afflicted, but it should not be injured. ‘Bodily exercise,’ says the Apostle, ‘profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things.’ But this ‘little’ is, not in respect of its appetites, but that a proper care of the flesh might be observed, and the sobriety of a certain spiritual restraint be practised, so that nothing excessive, either in measure, mode, or degree, unbecoming to the servant of God, may appear in this exercise.”

But that the virtue of discretion be the better known, hear again what S. Bernard says in praise of it: “The virtue of discretion languishes without the fervour of charity, and a vehement fervour without the moderation of discretion is destructive. He is to be praised who conjoins these two, with whom fervour reveals discretion, and discretion guides fervour.” And again, “Discretion gives order to virtue, and order gives its right measure, from which flow its beauty and perpetuity. It is by order, says the Psalmist, that the days are established, and by ‘days’ virtue is signified. In short, discretion is not so much a distinct virtue, as a certain moderator and rein of virtues, a regulator of affections, a mistress of manners. Take away discretion, and virtue becomes vice, and natural affection a cause of trouble and of its own defeat.”

You have seen, then, at length, how, in this example of the disciples plucking the ears of corn, we are warned against luxury and gluttony. But I have not said how their conduct condemned the pomps of the world. I cannot altogether pass this over in silence, although I cannot now enter into this matter. It will be sufficient to say, that by their example we have a sort of return to the happy simplicity of primitive times, in which men were content with what nature set before them, with fruits of trees, and roots of vegetables, and pure water. If there was something of this simplicity of living now, we should not want so many machines, such utensils, such apparel, such sumptuous houses and furniture, which in these days, by their very complication, are a sort of intricate burden to human life.

CHAPTER XLV

Of the Ministrations of Martha and of Mary. Also of the order of Contemplation, and its Two Parts

ONE day the Lord Jesus went to Bethany, to the house of Martha and Mary, who loved him with all their heart, and received Him with all reverence and with great joy. Martha, the sister of Mary, for her part, was occupied in preparing a banquet as honourable as possible, for our Lord and His disciples. But Mary sat at the feet of our Lord. And when our Lord, who could never be idle, spake to her, as His manner was, the words of eternal life, she, with eyes and ears intent upon Him, was delighted with His conversation beyond expression; neither thought she of anything else. Martha, then, was pained at her seeming want of consideration, and bade our Lord compel her to take part in the preparations with which she was herself so much occupied. But our Lord was not of her opinion, and was told that Mary had chosen the best part. Now Mary, who had been absorbed in her Lord's words, awoke, as it were, to a sense of her sister's vexation, like one startled out of sleep, and turning her face towards the ground, remained silent. But after our Lord's reply to Martha, Mary rested more securely and more sweetly than ever.

Then, the repast being ready, and our Lord ceasing to speak, she arose at once, and brought Him water for His hands, and henceforth sitting near Him, served Him most attentively. Behold, then, our Lord entering the house, see with what intense joy they receive Him; and dwell, as we have before prescribed, upon every act, for every feature of this event is most beautiful.

You must know, that these two sisters represent the Active and Contemplative Life. This is a subject which must be dealt with at some length, but I will be as brief as possible, and take S. Bernard throughout for my guide. We live a double kind of life, and often we know not how to do so. The Active Life is signified by Martha. But in this life there are two parts. The first part is that in which each one lives chiefly for his own good, correcting his vices, putting on virtues, and benefiting his neighbour, by works of justice, piety, and charity. The second part is that in which a man exerts himself chiefly for the benefit of his neighbour, all the while, of course, also benefiting his own soul; for example, in guiding others, teaching and helping them, thus procuring their salvation, as Bishops, Preachers, etc., do.

Now, between the two parts of the Active Life, lies the Contemplative, and this is the order. At first, a soul exercises itself in prayer, the study of Holy Scripture, and other good and pious works, in order to uproot vices and acquire virtues. Secondly, it reposes in contemplation, in seeking solitude, and in giving itself individually to waiting upon God. Thirdly, when once embued by the two preceding exercises, with virtue and wisdom, it proceeds to give itself to the work of saving others. It must first be, as I have shown in the first part of the Active Life, that the soul must be washed, cleansed, and strengthened in the exercise of virtues; then, in the Contemplative Life, it must be formed, enlightened, and enkindled; and then, finally, it can give itself with confidence to the service and aid of others.

We will now proceed with the authorities for this order; and first point out how the Active Life ought to precede the Contemplative.

CHAPTER XLVI

The Active precedes the Contemplative Life

S. BERNARD speaks in this wise: “Jesus, having arrived at the town, the two sisters, Martha and Mary, that is to say, action and thought, met him. And Jesus, having come to them, conferred upon each that which was fitting: upon action, strength; upon thought, wisdom. The Apostle praised both, and referred to them in the passage ‘the power of God and the wisdom of God.’ But why is it Martha meets Him at the entrance to the town, whilst Mary sat still in the house, and Martha first was busy in serving Him, Mary afterwards sat at His feet and heard His words? Is it not as much as to say, action goes before contemplation, and is followed by it? Indeed, every one who wills to attain to the rest of contemplation must first diligently lead a life of labour, as it is written, ‘My Son, if thou desire wisdom, keep the commandments, and the Lord shall give her unto thee.’ And again, ‘Through Thy commandments I get understanding.’ And again, ‘Purifying their hearts by faith.’ But what faith? Faith that worketh by love.” The same Saint says also, “Perhaps, you aspire to the rest of contemplation: you do well. But you must not forget the flowers with which the couch of the Spouse must be covered. Be careful, then, to adorn your own with the flowers of good works, and remember that holy repose is the product of the exercise of virtues, as fruits are formed from flowers. There may be something of sloth in the repose you desire, unless labour purchase it. The fruitfulness of Leah must precede the embrace of Rachel. Otherwise, we reverse the order of the Apostle, ‘If any would not work, neither should he eat.’ ‘Through obeying Thy commandments,’ says the Psalmist, ‘I get understanding;’ that is, the joy of contemplation arises from keeping the Divine Law. If obedience and deference to tradition were set aside by this love of contemplation, then the couch of the Spouse would not be covered

with flowers, but with nettles and hemlock, neither would He respond to your prayers and calls. God does not approve of idleness; He says by the Prophet, ‘When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear.’ Your couch is not decked with flowers, but stained and polluted, and can you in such a state invite the King of Glory to come to you?” And again, “Do you continue to spread forth your hands towards God, you who annoy your brethren, cause disunion, and withdraw from them? But what is required of you? You must purge your conscience from all stain of anger, contention, murmuring, envy, and put far from you everything that is contrary to peace and rightful submission. Then bring about you the flowers of good actions and praiseworthy pursuits, the perfumes of virtues, that is to say, of everything that is true, everything that is just, everything that is holy, everything that is lovely, everything that is of good report, whether in virtue or discipline. Think of these things, give thyself wholly to them. Thus, and thus only, will you be able to call upon the Spouse with safety, when you can introduce Him in this manner, saying, ‘Our couch is flowery, my conscience, that is, is redolent of graces, piety, peace, meekness, justice, obedience, brightness, lowliness.’ ” It will thus be seen how the first part of the Active Life must precede the Contemplative.

CHAPTER XLVII

Of Prayer. Also, of Seven Qualifications of a Good Teacher

WE will now consider how the Contemplative Life goes before the second part of the Active Life, occupying, as it were, a middle position between them.

S. Bernard says, “We should be on our guard against giving that which we have received for ourselves, and against retaining that which we ought to give. Thus, you retain that which you should impart, if, when full of virtues and gifted with eloquence and knowledge, you, through fear, or idleness, or false humility, preserve an unpardonable silence, when by your words you might edify others; and thus you incur the condemnation of him who withholds ‘corn from the people.’ On the contrary, you scatter that which is your own and lose it, if, before you are filled, being still half-full of yourself, you hasten to pour it out upon others, labouring contrary to the law, with the first-born of oxen, or shearing the first-born of sheep. You rob yourself of that salvation and life which you communicate to others, when, without a pure intention—either puffed up with vainglory or actuated by some motive of earthly gain—you perform your actions. If you were wise, you would show yourself more like a shell than a mere canal. The second gives out as soon as it receives, the first waits until it is full before it overflows. You, my friend, whose own salvation is but little assured, whose charity is nothing, or but frail, and yields like a reed to every breath, believes every spirit, and is shaken by every wind of doctrine; you, whose charity seems so great, that it outstrips the precept and loves neighbour more than self, and yet at the same time is so feeble, so small, that, contrary to the precept, it melts before favour, quails before fear, is troubled by

sadness, is fettered by avarice, yields to suspicion, is disquieted by ambition, is angered by injurious words, is devoured by anxiety, is elated by honour, is consumed by envy, by what madness have you brought yourself to think that you ought to be occupied with the care of others? Hear what caution advises, and watchful charity: 'I mean not,' says the Apostle, 'that other men be eased, and ye burdened,' but that there should be 'equality.' Do not 'make thyself over wise.' It is enough for you to love your neighbour as yourself, that there may be 'equality.' And again, 'Fill yourself, then shall you overflow to others.' A mild and prudent charity observes a just proportion, as Solomon teaches, 'and does not only overflow.' And the Apostle's admonition is to the same effect. Who is more holy than Paul, or more wise than Solomon? See how much we need, then, for our own salvation, and let us be careful to receive before we presume to give.

"But as the physician approaches the wounded, so does the Spirit approach the soul. For who has not been some time wounded by the darts of Satan? First, then, the tumour or ulcer must be removed. It must be opened with the sharp needle of compunction if the sore of evil habit is to be healed. But the pain is sharp, and the operation must be soothed by the unction of devotion, which is nothing else but the joy which springs from the hope of pardon. 'Thou,' says the Psalmist, 'hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving.' Then follow the remedies of repentance, fastings, watchings, prayers, alms, a life of good works, for good works are a nourishment of the soul. 'My meat,' says our Lord, 'is to do the will of Him that sent Me.' And again, by alms, 'thou layest up a good treasure in the sight of the Most High.' Food excites thirst, therefore to the food of good works will be added the drink of prayer; the two together, as it were, digested in the conscience, become well-pleasing to God. It is by praying that the wine which maketh glad the heart of man is drunk, the wine of the Spirit which elevates, produces oblivion of carnal joys, bedews the interior of the parched conscience, causes the food of good works to digest, unfolds itself throughout the powers of the soul, strengthens faith, enkindles hope, vivifies and enriches charity, and makes luxuriant the fruits of holiness. It is after food and drink, and strenuous exertion, that we can go to rest, and enjoy the refreshing calm of contemplation. Thus the soul rests in the Lord in contemplative prayer,

seeing as in a glass darkly, and filled with desire for a Vision, by a sort of scintillation of His glory as He passes by. ‘With my soul,’ says the Prophet, ‘have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit have I sought Thee early.’ Such is the love which glows in the soul, and which the faithful servant should possess, whom His Lord places over His household, that he may possess the power of sympathy, and impart that glow to others. ‘Who is weak, and I am not weak; who is offended, and I burn not?’ There is no room for vanity, where all is occupied by charity; and charity, if it is perfect, is the fulfilling of the law and the satisfaction of the heart. In short, God is love, and nothing created can fill the creature who is made after the image of God, but God who is love, and who alone is greater than it. Without this love, it is dangerous to be prominent, even though possessing other virtues. ‘Though I have all knowledge, though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, I am nothing,’ says S. Paul. See, then, what we ought to receive, before we presume to give out! First, compunction; secondly, devotion; thirdly, the travail of penitence; fourthly, labour of piety; fifthly, fervour of prayer; sixthly, the rest of contemplation; seventhly, the fulness of charity. All these that One and Selfsame Spirit createth in us by the operation which is called infusion, up to the point where the other operation, which is called effusion, can purely and safely come into exercise to the praise and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Again, the same author says, “The purpose of true and chaste contemplation is to inflame the soul with a vehement glow of Divine love, to fill it with zeal, and with an intense desire of possessing God, who loves it in return, when the rest of contemplation is freely abandoned for the claims of active duty. In such case, after devotion has been intermitted, the soul will return to it with greater sweetness and delight, and, having tasted this heavenly joy, will be less enamoured of the joys of earth. Thus the soul will check itself by the alternate emotions of fear and desire—fearing lest it should in a little matter deviate from the will of God, and desiring to fulfil it more and more, both in devotion and action. Perhaps it was something like this Job felt when he said, ‘When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone?’ That is, during my enjoyment of rest in God, I fear neglect of work; during work, I fear neglect of devotion. The holy man seemed to hesitate between the fruit of active service, and the rest of

contemplation; whilst always well occupied, he nevertheless was full of compunction for faults and errors, and every moment sorrowfully inquiring after the will of God. The only remedy for this state is prayer; it is the only refuge. By frequent ejaculations towards God we must discover from Him what we ought to do, and when and how to do it.”

We have now some idea of the two parts of the Active Life, and how between them is the Contemplative Life, and know something of their order and mutual relation.

But of the third point, that is, the second part of the Active Life, we have no intention here to treat; it consists in ministerial duties and labouring for souls, which form no part of our present subject. What is needed, as the preliminary of contemplation, is the zeal which is exhibited in correcting our vices, and in forming virtues, which constitutes the first part of the Active Life.

CHAPTER XLVIII

Of the Exercises of the Active Life

OF the Active Life we have already spoken, especially from S. Bernard's forty-sixth sermon on the Canticles. However, I should like to bring forward further quotations from this Saint's writings, that we may the more carefully avoid vices, and the more ardently cultivate virtues. " 'Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord,' says the Prophet. He has put knowledge last, as a picture which cannot be stretched upon a void. Thus there are two conditions which go before it, and give it, as it were, a solid basis. You will come to knowledge assuredly; if first, through the benefit of hope, 'reaping in mercy,' you find peace. You sow to righteousness, if, by the true knowledge of yourself, you have watched in the fear of God, if you have wept, given alms, done works of piety, if you have fasted, if you have smitten your breast again and again with compunction, given Heaven no rest with your cries. This is to sow to righteousness. The seeds, they are the good works, the good movements of zeal; the seeds, they are the tears. 'He that goeth,' says the Psalmist, 'on his way weeping, beareth forth good seed.' "

Speaking in the name of the spouse, who addresses the companions of the Bridegroom, and seeks a kiss, that is, the joy of rapt contemplation, S. Bernard says, "If He has the least care for me, 'let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.' I am not ungrateful, I love." And again, "For long years I have striven to live in soberness and chastity; I occupy myself in reading, I resist vices, I bow myself in frequent prayer, I watch against temptations, I pass my years in the bitterness of my soul, I study, as much as I am able, to live in peace with my brethren, in submission to those who are set over me, and in all my actions reverence my elders. I covet nothing

of another's, I have spent myself and my goods on others, I have eaten bread with the sweat of my brow, but what has come of it all?—only habit, no sweetness.” “I have fulfilled all Thy commandments, but my soul is in the midst of them, as earth without water. That my burnt offering may be fat, O, I pray Him to kiss me with the kiss of His mouth.”

“You,” again S. Bernard says, “if you impart liberally to your companions the gift which you have received from above, if you have shown yourself on all sides courteous, affectionate, humble, pleasant, tractable, every one will bear testimony that you diffuse around you the odour of most precious perfumes. Whoever not only supports the infirmities of the weak, whether bodily or spiritual, but further, if he can and may, aids them with kindnesses, sustains them with counsel, or does not cease to help them by his prayers,—whoever, I say, bestows such benefits, gives forth a sweet odour, an odour of the best ointments, a balm for its sweetness. Such an one in the midst of a congregation may be pointed at and addressed in these words, ‘This is a lover of the brethren, and of Israel, ‘who prayeth much for the people, and for the holy city.’ ” “Such are the masters who have fully learnt from the Great Master of all, the ways of life, and teach us to this day. What have we learnt from them, what have they taught us, these holy Apostles? Not, indeed, the fisherman’s art, or that of tent-making; not, indeed, to read Plato, nor to be conversant with the subtleties of Aristotle; not always to be learning, without ever coming to the knowledge of the truth. No, they have taught us to live. Do you deem it a small thing, to know how to live? No, it is something great, yea, very great. He has not learnt it who is puffed up with pride, who is stained with self-indulgence, who is labouring under all the plagues of the soul. This is not to live, this is to destroy life, or hasten towards the gates of death. To live well, according to me, is to suffer evil, do well, and persevere to the end. It is vulgarly said, ‘He who eats well, lives well.’ But wickedness deceives itself, for he does not live well who does not do good. I think you who are amongst others, live well if you live regularly, sociably, and humbly—regularly, in regard to yourself; sociably, in reference to others; humbly, before God. Regularly, by walking circumspectly in the presence of God and before others, guarding yourself from sin and from being a ground of offence. Sociably, by loving and being loved, showing yourself kind and affable, bearing patiently and even cheerfully the infirmities of the weak, both moral and corporeal.

Humbly, by keeping yourself, after you have discharged your duties, from the spirit of vanity, which is apt to spring from the consideration of their proper accomplishment; by promptly stopping whatever movements of self-complacency you experience.

“Further, we must bear evil aright; and as there are three kinds of evil, so there are three ways of meeting it. There is the evil which you suffer from yourself, the evil which comes from your neighbour, and the evil which is from God. The first is the austerity of penitence, the second is the vexation from another’s malice, the third is the scourge of Divine chastisement. In that which you suffer from yourself, you ought to make a voluntary sacrifice of it; in that which is from your neighbour, you should manifest patience; in that which is from God, you should avoid murmuring, and accept it with thankfulness.” This, concerning the exercise of the first part of the Active Life, will suffice.

CHAPTER XLIX

Concerning the Exercise of the Contemplative Life

OUR next subject is the Contemplative Life. S. Bernard speaks of it thus: "The Bridegroom, the well-beloved, places 'His left hand' under the head of the spouse, that she may rest and sleep. And now, as her guardian, watches her with all possible tenderness, lest her maidens, in their constant and minute necessities, awake her." And again, "I have exceeding joy in the thought, that His Majesty should deign to abase Himself so as to hold sweet and familiar intercourse with our feebleness, and that the Supreme Deity should not think it beneath Him to be united with the soul which is exiled. If I doubt not that I shall obtain in Heaven, that of which on earth I read in Holy Scripture, my soul responds to the truth of the sacred page, except that it cannot express all that my soul will then become, and even now is able to feel. What, then, shall it receive, think you, this soul which is already gifted with such familiarity with, and is already admitted to the embrace of, God; cherished, as it were, in His bosom, guarded by His care, watched over by His love, lest whilst sleeping, by any one it should be stirred, before it awake of itself?" "This sleep of the spouse is not a bodily sleep. It is a sleep of life, a wakeful sleep, illuminating the inner being, driving away death, and giving an assurance of life eternal. Indeed, this sleep is one which does not dull the senses, but steals them away. It is a sort of death. I hesitate not to say so, since the Apostle commends those who, whilst living in the flesh, 'are dead,' and their 'life hid with Christ in God.' Therefore I, without any absurdity, call this ecstasy of the Spouse death, who indeed not from life itself, but from the snares of life, escapes, and is thus enabled to say, 'My soul is escaped, as a bird out of the snare of the hunter.' We walk, indeed, in

this life in the midst of snares, which are not to be feared, so long as with some holy and fervent thought the soul is occupied, if it rise up thereby to such a height as to be beyond the reach of ordinary habit, and ways of thinking. 'In vain is the net spread in the sight of the bird.' Who, then, would fear temptations to evil desire and appetite, where life itself was not felt? For when the soul is so absorbed, that if not life, yet the consciousness of life, is suspended, how then can it feel temptation? 'Who will give me wings like a dove, that I may fly away and be at rest.' Please God, may I oftentimes be thus withdrawn from things of sense, that I may escape the snares of death, and not feel the deadly blandishments of a life of ease and pleasure, that I may be insensible to the temptations of the flesh, to the fire of avarice, to the goads of anger and impatience, to the distress of anxiety, to the disappointments of earthly cares! May my soul die the death of the righteous, so that no injustice may ensnare it, no wickedness allure it. It is a good death, which does not take away life, which brings in a better life; good, that by which the body does not fall, but the soul is raised, but this is the death of men. My soul also dies, if it may be said, with the death of angels; going forth from the memory of the present, it despoils itself not only of the desire, but also of the images of inferior and corporeal things, and its conversation is confined to those things which bear the impress of perfect purity. Such is the state, I think, which deserves the name of contemplation. It is the part of human virtue, to live in the midst of temptations, and not to be enchained by them; but to rise above all material forms, is a mark of angelic purity. Both, it is true, are the gift of God. Both are kinds of death, both break through the barriers of self-love, but one rises higher than the other. Blessed is he who is able to say, 'I get me away far off, and remain in the wilderness.' He was not content to go forth, unless he went far, that he might find rest. You have freed yourself from the snares of the flesh to such a degree as not to obey its lusts, nor be held by its seductions, in going forth you have separated yourself; but you have not yet gone 'far off' unless you are able, in the purity of your mind, to soar above those phantoms of material things which rush into it. Do not promise yourself rest, until you reach this point. You are deceived, if you hope to find on this side of it a place of repose, an inner solitude, a calm light, a peaceful resting-place. Show me some one who has tasted all these, and I at once acknowledge that he is capable of saying from his own experience,

‘Turn to thy rest, O my soul, turn to thy rest, because the Lord hath rewarded thee.’ Here is truly a place of solitude, a dwelling-place of light.”

Again, the same writer says, “I think that this is the solitude into which the spouse is drawn, and where, charmed by the beauty of the place, the soul sleeps in the embrace of her Husband, that is to say, is elevated in spirit; and that, during the time her maidens, her companions, have received orders not to disturb her before she desires. And how is this? These companions have not received a simple and slight admonition, but one given in a new and unwonted manner, ‘by the roes and by the hinds of the field.’ These creatures seem to represent holy souls delivered from the burden of the flesh, also the angels who are with God from their keenness of sight, and swiftness of flight; for these two qualities, we know, appertain to these spirits, for easily do they mount high, and dive down into the depths. That they are said to belong to ‘the field’, evidently indicates their freedom and power of roaming, as it were, in the open spaces of contemplation. But why this adjuration, ‘I charge you’? Certainly, lest the maidens, restless and light, should for some slight cause distract the Spouse in this precious companionship, into which the Spouse is admitted as often as the gift of contemplation is imparted. Fairly, then, are they deterred from awaking the Spouse, who herself is ever in due time solicitous for their welfare. The Bridegroom knows her ardent love for her companions, her maternal affection for them, her desire ever to grant them their requests, and to be with them; it is on this account that he determines to entrust this arrangement to her discretion.”

CHAPTER L

Of Three Kinds of Contemplation

YOU must know that there are three kinds of contemplation; the two principal regard the perfect; the third is added for the imperfect. Those kinds of contemplation which suit the perfect are upon the Majesty of God, and the Heavenly Court. The third, which is for beginners, and for imperfect persons, is on the Humanity of Christ, which I now in this book describe. You must commence with this, if you would mount up to the others; otherwise you will make no progress, and remain in the state of fear. Very necessary, then, is the teaching which follows; for never will you safely attain to the high things of God, unless you, for a long time and diligently, exercise yourself in the preliminary kind of contemplation.

Upon this S. Bernard speaks thus: “You know, there are two kinds of contemplation; one on the state, the bliss, and glory of the City which is above, the actions and the rest of the vast multitude which occupy the Heavenly Court; the other on the Majesty, the Eternity, the Divinity of the King Himself. The one is the wall around the stone; the other is the stone itself. The more difficult it is to penetrate into the second, the more sweet is that which is extracted from it. But as the Church cannot on every side penetrate this stone, and as it is not given to all those who are in the Church to contemplate the secrets of the Divine Will, nor to comprehend in themselves the deep things of God; therefore one is able to dwell not only in the clefts of the rock, but also in the excavations of the wall which is around it. Thus, the perfect are those who, daring from the purity of their conscience and the depth of their understanding, to penetrate into the secrets of wisdom, dwell in the clefts of the rock. The rest remain in the excavations of the wall. Those who are not capable of penetrating the rock, or who may not dare, are content to dig about the inclosure, or to trace in

spirit the glory of the saints. If even this may not seem possible to any one, propose to him Jesus crucified, so that he without labour may dwell in the holes of the rock, which he has not cut. The Jews pierced Him, and he must enter into the labours of the unbeliever, that he may become a believer. Nor should he fear that he will suffer repulse who is invited to enter. ‘Enter into the rock,’ says the Prophet, ‘and hide thee in the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord and for the glory of His majesty.’ For the weak and effortless soul, the holes are already dug, where a hiding-place may be found, until strength and health are gained: so that he may at length be able to penetrate into the living stone, by which access may be obtained into the depths of the Incarnate Word, through the vigour and purity of his spirit. And if by the holes of the earth we mean that the text says, ‘They pierced My hands and My feet,’ there can be no doubt of the salvation of the soul which finds a refuge there. What is more efficacious for healing the wounds of conscience, and for purging the inner eye of the soul, than the constant meditation on the Wounds of Christ? But until the soul is perfectly healed and cured, I do not see how one is able to apply to it these words, ‘Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice.’ How can the soul dare to show its face, or raise its voice, when it is bidden to hide itself? ‘Hide thyself,’ says the Prophet, ‘in the caves of the earth.’ Why? if not because the face is not fair, not worthy to be seen? It is not worthy to be seen, as long as it is not able to see itself. But when, by dwelling in the caves of the earth, the inner eye of the soul has been healed, so that with open face the glory of God can be beheld; then, indeed, what is seen he will trustfully declare, being acceptable both in voice and countenance. For it is necessary that the countenance should be pleasing to God, which is raised up to the contemplation of His glory; and this it cannot be, unless it is clear and pure itself, and is transformed into the same brightness which it contemplates; otherwise it will be thrown back by the force of the unwonted brightness with which it is itself in contrast. Therefore, when the pure countenance can look on the pure truth, then the Spouse desires to see it, and to hear also the voice.” Thus S. Bernard teaches.

You are convinced, then, of the necessity of meditating on the Life of Christ; for it is evident, according to the authority I have quoted, that unless you are thereby purified, you can never attain to the sublime heights of

God. Exercise yourself, then, in this contemplation with watchfulness and assiduousness.

But you must know that there are three kinds of contemplation; that on the Humanity of Christ, on the Heavenly Court, and on the Divine Majesty. You must further bear in mind, that in each of these there are two elevations of soul, the intellectual and the affective. S. Bernard speaks of these in this manner: “There are two raptures in blessed contemplation; one, of the understanding; the other, of the heart; one, of light; the other, of heat; one, in knowledge; the other, in devotion. Truly pious affection; a heart glowing with charity, the outpourings of holy devotion; an earnestness of spirit, charged with zeal—these cannot come forth save from that wine-cellar, ‘the banquetinghouse’ of the Beloved.” This, and much else to the same effect, may be gathered from S. Bernard’s writings.

CHAPTER LI

Of Contemplation on the Humanity of Christ

ON this point S. Bernard says, “There are two things to be purified in us; the understanding, and the heart: the understanding, that we may know; the heart, that we may will.” And again, “The understanding is depressed when it thinks of many objects, when it does not concentrate itself upon a single and distinct theme of meditation, namely, upon that ‘City whose foundation is in itself.’ ” And further on, he says, “The affections, which are influenced by the different passions of the corrupt body, can no way be appeased, I do not say healed, until the will seeks and tends towards one only object.” “It is Christ who illumines the understanding; it is Christ who purges the heart. Indeed, the Son of God is come, and has worked so many and so great miracles in the world, that He can of right exact that our minds should be drawn away from the contemplation of the things of the world, and given unceasingly to the contemplation of the marvels which He hath wrought. For verily He has left us most spacious fields for our understanding to roam in, and a torrent of reflections most profound. Who, then, is sufficient to think of all that God hath provided for us, of the way He has come to us, and the help He hath brought: how His Supreme Majesty has willed to die that we may live, to serve us that we may reign, to be exiled that we may be brought back to our country, and to abase Himself to perform the meanest actions, that He may place us over all His works.” And again, “Whence shall the light of truth come, in this darkness? Whence shall charity arise, in this evil age, in this world which altogether lieth in wickedness? Who then, think you, shall enlighten our understanding, who shall inflame our hearts? All this shall come to pass, if we will but be turned to Christ, that the veil may be taken away from our hearts.”

The same author adds, “ ‘A little bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie betwixt my breasts.’ And I, brethren, since the commencement of my conversion, for the mass of merits which I stand in need of, place upon my breast this little bundle which I have collected out of all the distresses and bitternesses of my God. Thus I will gather together, first, the necessities of His Infancy, then the labours which He underwent in preaching, His fatigues in journeyings, His watchings in prayer, His temptations in fasting, His tears in compassion, the snares which are laid to entrap Him in His words, His perils amongst false brethren, injuries when spit upon, struck, derided, nailed to the Cross, and all which He endured for the salvation of the human race, which is set forth so copiously in the pages of the Gospel.” And further on, again: “To meditate upon these things,” I have said, “is true wisdom; in these, is to be found the perfection of righteousness, the fulness of knowledge, the treasures of salvation, abundance of merit. They will provide us from time to time with a drink of wholesome bitterness, a sweet unction of consolation: they will uphold me in adversity, and repress me in prosperity: they will, whilst I walk in the royal way, amid the joys and sorrows of this present life, keep me safe, and protect me on the right hand and on the left from the evils which threaten me. These sufferings conciliate to me the Judge of the world, representing Him who is terrible and powerful, as meek and lowly; portraying Him as not only placable, but friendly and merciful, kind and affectionate, who is unapproachable to princes, and terrible to the kings of the earth. Therefore these sufferings are my constant theme, as you know; they are my constant meditation, as God knows. I have them on my lips, and in my heart, and my pen is ever writing about them; they are, indeed, my most deep and interior philosophy—which is nothing else, but to know ‘Jesus and Him crucified.’ ” This suffices for the contemplation of the Humanity of Jesus, for all this book is upon it.

It is not, you must know, a necessity that the Active Life should precede this species of contemplation, because it has to do with corporeal things, the actions of Christ considered as to His Humanity. It is also proposed as more familiar and as more easy not only to the more perfect, but also to beginners; for in it, as in the Active Life, our aim is to purify ourselves from our faults and to acquire virtues; both concur as to this purpose. But when it is laid down, that the Active Life ought to go before the Contemplative, this

is true chiefly in its sublimer application, as in the contemplation on the Heavenly Court, and on the Majesty of God, which are reserved for persons of greater spiritual attainment. Therefore, properly speaking, contemplation, when directed to the Humanity of Christ, is more rightly called meditation than contemplation. We will now, under the guidance of the same Saint, treat of the other kinds of contemplation.

CHAPTER LII

Of Contemplation on the Heavenly Court

OF the contemplation of the Heavenly Court, S. Bernard writes thus: “It is permitted each one of us, during the time of this mortal life, now, indeed, to visit in spirit the Patriarchs, now to salute the Prophets, now to mingle with the assembly of the Apostles, now to take our place amid the choirs of the martyrs; we are able to pass through the ranks and mansions of the heavenly Powers, from the lowest angel to the Cherubim and Seraphim, with all the alacrity of our mind, as devotion may lead us. Where we are most attracted by the inspiration of the Spirit, according to His will, if we stop and knock, immediately it shall be opened unto us.” Again, “Blessed is he whose meditation is alway in the Presence of the Lord; whose reflections are continually on the everlasting delights which are at the right hand of the Lord. What can appear to him a trial, who is always occupied with the thought that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared to future glory? What can he desire in this evil world, whose eye alway sees the good things of the Lord in the land of the living, who ever gazes on eternal rewards?” “Who will grant me, that we may all stand on high, and see the exaltation which is about to come to us from the Lord?” “What can be so good, what else can be so good, as in spirit to roam amongst those glories, which the body is not yet able to attain to?” “Who is there of you, thinking with himself on the future life, its joy, blessedness, sweetness, the glory of the sons of God; who of you, I say, reflecting on these things, with a tranquil conscience, that would not continually through the fulness of inward delight cry out, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here.’ The ‘here’ being not this painful pilgrimage, where we are detained in the body, but the sweet and salutary thought with which the heart is possessed. ‘Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will flee away and be at rest?’ ” “I beseech

you, brethren, let not your hearts be burdened with worldly cares; free, I pray you, your hearts from the weight of earthly thoughts.” “Construct in your hearts not only tabernacles for Patriarchs and Prophets, but all the mansions of the Heavenly Court; multiply their dwellings, as he did who entered them, offering in the tabernacle of the Lord the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and saying that psalm to the Lord, ‘O how amiable are Thy dwellings, Thou Lord of Hosts; my soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord.’ Go round, brethren, with the sacrifice of piety and devotion; visit in spirit those heavenly and varied abodes which are the mansions in the Father’s House, prostrating your hearts before the Throne of God and of the Lamb; reverence, likewise, the orders of the Angels, the number of the Patriarchs, the circle of the Prophets, the assembly of the Apostles; behold the crowns of the martyrs, glowing with purple flowers; admire the choirs of the Virgins, redolent with lilies, and as far as human infirmity will permit, enjoy the mellifluous strains of the ‘new song.’ ‘When I remember these things,’ says the Psalmist, ‘I pour out my soul in me; for I will go into the place of the wonderful Tabernacle, even to the House of God.’ ” Thus far S. Bernard, and this is enough on the contemplation of the Heavenly Country.

CHAPTER LIII

On the Contemplation of the Majesty of God. Also that there are Four Kinds of Contemplation

LET us approach the more sublime contemplation, which, I believe, but few attain to, the contemplation of the Lord God. Let us hear with respect what S. Bernard says, so being as it were introduced by him, we may make the attempt, if the Lord will graciously permit us thus to draw near to Him. He says, in speaking of the companions of the Spouse, that is, the angels who use those words, “We will make necklets of gold, inlaid with silver,” “Gold is the brightness of Divinity; gold is the wisdom which comes from on high. It is of this gold that the heavenly goldsmiths promise that they will make brilliant ornaments, and insert them in the inner ears of the soul. And I conclude that we must understand thereby, that they will convey to the soul certain spiritual similitudes, and in them most pure intuitions of Divine wisdom, so that the soul may see at least in a mirror, through ‘a glass darkly,’ that which cannot be now seen face to face. I speak of Divine things, and what is said will be enigmas save to those who have themselves some experience of them; how, for example, whilst still in this mortal body, and in a state of faith, and whilst the interior light is not yet unveiled, nevertheless, the contemplation of pure truth is already in some degree experienced in us, at least in part, in such a manner, that he who has this gift from above, is able to apply to his own case the words of the Apostle, ‘Now I know in part,’ or those, ‘We know in part, we prophesy in part.’ But when there is within us for a moment a coruscation of the Divine light, our spirit is entranced by a communication of such splendour; soon there follow, I

know not how, certain figurative resemblances of inferior things, accommodated to the divinely infused ideas, by the medium of which, the most pure and splendid ray of truth is so tempered as to become more bearable to the mind itself, and more easily communicated to others. It seems to me that these interposing images are formed in us by the suggestions of holy angels; after the same manner, that the evil angels make evil suggestions, of which there is no doubt.” And again, “Happy the mind which has learnt to dig deeply in the surrounding wall; but happier he who is on the rock itself. It is permitted, indeed, to dig in the rock, but for this there is need of greater purity of soul, of more ardent aims, and the claims of a stronger sanctity. Who, then, is capable of this? Is not he, forsooth, who said, ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’? Does it not seem that the writer is immersed in the deep recesses of the Word, and that, from the secret sanctuary of the heart of his Master, he was drawing forth the marrow of divine wisdom?” And again, “The more laboriously one digs in the rock, the more sweet will be that which we draw from it. Do not fear, because Scripture threatens the explorers of His Majesty; bring with you a pure and single eye, you shall not be overwhelmed by His glory, but admitted to it, that is, if you seek the glory of God, and not your own. If any one is oppressed, it is by his own glory, not God’s. If you are weighed down by the first, it is not possible to raise your head to the second, however much you may wish it. Disburden yourself, then, and dig with safety into the rock, where you will find hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge. What if you hesitate still, hear the rock itself: ‘Those who labour with me shall not err,’ ‘Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will flee away and be at rest.’ There the meek and simple find rest, where the deceitful, the proud, the envious of vainglory, are overwhelmed.” And further on, “He is not overwhelmed, who is the explorer, not of the Divine Majesty, but of the Divine Will. And if sometimes he does venture to regard the Divine Majesty, it is not as a curious explorer, but as an admirer. But if in rapt contemplation he is drawn towards it, this is the finger of the Lord, which mercifully elevates him; not the temerity of man insolently approaching the deep things of God. Since, then, the Apostle relates his rapture, to excuse himself of presumption, what other mortal would dare to enter, in his own strength, upon a scrutiny of the Divine Majesty, and would not fear to draw near to Divine secrets in an

importunate manner? The explorers of the Divine Majesty, I call invaders of God; they are not those who are rapt, but those who rush upon Him. These, therefore, are overwhelmed by His glory. To explore His Majesty is a formidable act; to explore His Will, is both pious and safe. Why, then, should I not with all diligence search into the secret of His glorious Will, which I have always to obey? Soft is that glory which emanates from the contemplation of His Sweetness, and from gazing upon the riches of His Goodness and Mercy. Indeed, ‘we have seen His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father;’ that is, all that has appeared of this glory is full of sweetness and paternal love. This glory will not oppress me, though with all my powers I contemplate it; I rather should be impressed by it. For when we with open face behold it, we are transformed into the same image as that upon which we fix our gaze. Far be from me, that man should dare to seek conformity with God in the glory of His Majesty, and not in meekness of will. My glory would be, that the words may be said of me, ‘I have found ... a man after mine own heart’ The heart of the Spouse, is the Father’s heart. As the Lord said, ‘Be ye merciful, as your Father which is in Heaven is merciful. This is the resemblance which He desired to see in His Church, when He said, ‘Show Me thy countenance,’ that is, the expression of thy piety and meekness. He can raise his face with confidence towards the Rock, who resembles it ‘Draw near,’ He says to him, ‘and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be ashamed.’ How should the humble be confounded by the humble; the pious, by the holy; the meek, by the gentle. The pure countenance of the Spouse would plainly not be abhorred by the purity of the Rock, any more than light would be abhorred by light, virtue by virtue.

“These two sisters, Mary and Martha, signify two kinds of lives of the lovers of poverty. Some, with Martha, are anxious to prepare two viands for our Lord; namely, the correction of works by the seasoning of contrition; and works of piety with the condiment of devotion. But those who with Mary are occupied with God Himself alone, wish to contemplate what God is in the world, what in man, what He is in angels, what in Himself, what in the reprobate; how He is the Ruler and Governor of the world, the Liberator and Helper of men, the Sweetness and Beauty of angels, in Himself Beginning and End, the terror and dread of the reprobate; in creation,

wonderful; in man, lovable; in angels, desirable; in Himself, incomprehensible; in the reprobate, intolerable.” So S. Bernard

Further, in this contemplation of the majesty of God, there are four modes, of which S. Bernard thus speaks: “There are four kinds of contemplation: the first and highest is the admiration of Majesty. This requires a pure heart, freed from vice and from the burden of sin, which is more easily raised towards Heavenly things, and sometimes for a few moments held in a state of rapture and in an ecstasy of admiration. The second, which is necessary to the first, is the contemplation of Divine Judgments. A view of these strikes the beholder with fear, puts to flight vices, causes virtues to germinate, leads to wisdom, preserves humility.” And again, “A third kind of contemplation is engaged upon, or rather rests in the memory of past blessings, lest the soul become ungrateful, and the love of the Benefactor be not sufficiently regarded. The fourth forgets the things which are behind, rests only in the expectation of promises, which, as it is a meditation on that which is eternal, nourishes patience, and gives vigour to perseverance.” Thus far S. Bernard, and here ends what we have to say on the contemplation of the Majesty of God.

CHAPTER LIV

Of the Manner of living the Active Life. The Excellent Teaching of S. Bernard thereon

AFTER examining the exercises of the first part of the Active Life, and of the Contemplative Life and its different modes, it remains for us to see how we may best enter upon the former, with ease and effectually. You must know that the first part of the Active Life requires association with others, in the same way as the Contemplative demands solitude. In the Active Life, by living in constant contact with others, we shall arrive better and quicker to the end which it proposes. The presence of others makes us ashamed because of the vices we have, and because of the virtues we have not; and, therefore, we seek to amend in both respects. This does not take place in solitude, when there is no one to reprove us, and before whom we are ashamed to transgress. Also, we profit much from the rebukes as well as from the examples of others in whose company we are: we are led to avoid what is displeasing in them and condemned, and to acquire what is agreeable and commended. Thus must you act in this life: you must diligently observe and avoid your own faults and those of others, according as you have been already taught in many places, especially in the chapter on the Active Life. Consider well what is there said about vices and virtues, and bring yourself to practise what is taught; see how you should examine yourself, and observe the virtues of others, also imitate them, and humble yourself and preserve a spirit of fear before God, when you discover your own defects in regard to them. Thus S. Bernard teaches: “It is not without cause that for two or three days a languor of soul has attacked me, and an unusual dulness of mind and a sort of lassitude of spirit has taken hold upon me. I did run with alacrity, and lo! a stone of stumbling lay in my path; I

was hurt, and I fell. Pride was found in me, and the Lord turned away in anger from His servant. Hence came this sterility of soul, this meagreness of devotion which I experienced. How was my heart dried up, as curdled milk, as land in drought; nor could I shed one tear of compunction, my heart was so hard. I found no comfort in meditation. Where now is that rapt delight which once I felt? Where is that repose of soul? that peace and joy in the Holy Ghost? I work without diligence: in watches, sleepy; to wrath, prone; in hatred, persevering; in speech and at table, less restrained; to minister to others, slow and disinclined. Alas! all the mountains in turn the Lord visited, but He did not approach my dwelling.” Again, “I see one remarkable for abstinence; one, for a marvellous patience; another, for a consummate lowliness; another, for perfect meekness; another, abounding in mercifulness and piety; this one, frequently gifted with the power of contemplation; this one, sticking at and piercing through the heavens with fervent prayers—all these are conspicuous for their virtues. I look around me and see the fervent, the devout, all united in Christ, all with a wealth of heavenly gifts and graces: truly are they the mountains which the Lord has visited, and who receive the Spouse again and again ‘leaping upon’ them. But I, who find none of all this in me, what shall I think of myself but as one of the mountains of Gilboa, which the most benign Visitor of all the others passes by in anger and indignation? My little children, such a thought as this takes away the proud look, invites grace, and prepares the way for the coming of the Spouse.” And, further on, “I wish that you would not spare yourself, but accuse yourself, whenever you find yourself in the wrong, and perceive grace to be a little weaker, and virtue to be failing.” And again, “It is the duty of a man to examine himself, both as to his inner and outer life, and to be watchful over his ways and inclinations, and to suspect that pride is in all that he does, lest he be ensnared. ‘Blessed is the man who feareth always.’ ” “Learn to have yourself well in hand, to order your life, to rule your manners, to judge yourself, to arraign yourself before yourself, often to condemn yourself, and never to let yourself off with impunity. Let justice occupy the seat of judgment, let the guilty stand before it, and let conscience accuse yourself. No one loves himself more, no one will judge himself more faithfully. In the morning exact from yourself an account of the night, and see what precautions you should take for the coming day, When night has come, exact the account of the day, and make

resolutions for the coming night. If you thus are strict with yourself, there will be no time for wantonness. Live every hour according to your rule of life, taking spiritual duties and temporal, each at their right time, thus rendering to God the service of your spirit, and to your spirit the service of your body. If anything should be omitted, or imperfectly performed, either as to manner, place, or time, do not let it pass with impunity, but strive to make it up.” “How I revere them with my heart, how, think you, do I admire them, how do I embrace them with the affection of charity, who live day by day amongst others without offence, and who, choosing one or another for companionship, select those who are more fervent than the rest, and set them before them as examples, as models of the fulfilment of their duty, bodily and spiritual, to their Lord! Alas, me! says one of us, for I have observed a religious person, in watching and prayer, in whom I could discover thirty virtues, whilst I perhaps can find only one in myself! He had everything which the humility of religious emulation gives. Here is the fruit to draw from my discourse, that every one should always seek that which is highest in others, for in that consists the fulness of humility. If in some respect a grace seems to be given to you in larger proportion than to some other, you can, nevertheless, if you are animated with the true feeling of emulation, you can yet judge yourself inferior to him in other points. Thus you may be able to practise more mortification, or to labour more than another; but he may surpass you in patience, excel you in humility, be more eminent in charity. How, then, daily do you yield to the foolish and self-complacent thought, that you are better than he? Be a little more anxious to discover in what you fail, what is wanting to you. This would be more profitable.” At least, S. Bernard evidently thinks so.

You see, then, how important it is to be circumspect, and to examine yourself, and others also, but only that you may turn to account their example. Give diligence to this, whilst you are in the Active Life, always guarding the duties of humility, charity, and piety. Above all, occupy yourself with meditations upon the Life of Christ, and prayer; because by means of both, you will be enlightened as to vices and virtues, and you will be helped by these more than by all other exercises in gaining purity of soul, towards which with all your strength you ought to tend, for it includes all virtues, as I have shown, when treating of the Fast of our Lord.

If you have well understood the authorities which I have cited on this subject, you will not fail to grasp the truth, that the higher the contemplation you desire to attain to, the greater must be the purity of soul by which you fortify yourself. But the soul is purified by meditating on the Life of Christ, and especially upon His Passion, as you have seen from S. Bernard's general observations in the seventy-second sermon on the Song of Songs. The soul is purified also in Prayer, which is near to and a preparation for Contemplation, and that which prayer obtains by laborious exertion, contemplation tastes in sweet repose. We have now dealt with the Active Life enough.

CHAPTER LV

Of the Manner of living the Contemplative Life

OTHERWISE, far otherwise, must the Contemplative Life be lived. In it, the life is lived with God alone, and in solitude of spirit, of which I have spoken on the subject of our Lord's Fast. Neither the concerns of others nor our own temporal affairs should occupy us, or draw us away from our sole employment, from thought, devotion, and tenderness. Nothing of oneself is to remain; we must cast behind our back everything, as if we were unconscious or dead, in order to spend our time with God alone, unless necessity, in spite of ourselves, should oblige us to forego devotion. To be well instructed as to this wisdom in repose, as you have before seen in S. Bernard's fortieth sermon on the Song of Solomon, it behoves you to lessen activity; and to remain silent, after the example of Mary, as much as possible, and as far as right, even when spoken to, as she left her Lord to speak and to reply, and committed all to His most gracious providence. Upon this hear S. Bernard, speaking with his usual eloquence: "Martha, whilst she acted, represented the form of the Active Life. Mary, however, depicted the Contemplative Life, as she sat and remained silent and motionless, listening only with all her power to the word of God; thus loving the grace of Divine knowledge, she drank it in from its Source, despising all else. Without, she is as one unconscious; within, she is thrilled with the ineffable delight of contemplating God." "Do not marvel, if he who toils and works hard, murmurs at one who rests in contemplation, because this took place in the Gospel, between Martha and Mary. Martha murmured against Mary, because she was cumbered about much serving, and her sister did not come to help her. Neither could the two be combined—the cares of

external service, and the desires of interior wisdom. For it is written of wisdom itself, that ‘it cometh by opportunity of leisure.’ It is therefore that Mary sat and remained motionless, and wills not to interrupt the repose of her silence, for fear of losing the sweet delights of contemplation, especially whilst she heard Jesus saying to her in spirit, Rest, and see how gracious the Lord is.’ ” Again, “Do you think in the house where Christ enters, murmuring should be heard? Happy home, and blessed society, where Martha complains of Mary. For that Mary should emulate Martha would not be fitting and right. For thus would she have complained that her sister had left her to serve the Lord alone? No. No. She who is occupied with God, has no thought to give to the inquietudes and occupations of others! Martha does not seem sufficient for her work, and, less capable herself, wishes to divide it with others. Regard, on the other hand, the prerogative of Mary, who in all her cause has some one to take her part. The Pharisee is indignant, the sister complains, the disciples themselves murmur. She is all the while silent, and Jesus replies on her behalf.” And further, “See how Mary tastes and sees how gracious the Lord is, how she, with devout heart and calm soul, sits at Jesus’ feet, regarding Him and listening to every word which flows from His lips, whose tenderness is deep, whose words are full of grace, whose beauty is more than the sons of men, nay, almost the beauty of angel-worlds. Rejoice and give thanks, Mary, for you have chosen the good part! Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see, and the ears that are worthy of hearing the things that ye hear! Blessed ye who listen for the faintest whispers of the Divine voice in stillness and silence, for it is good for a man to wait upon the Lord! Be simple; not only be without guile, but without a multiplicity of distracting occupations, so that you may enjoy communion with Him, whose Voice is sweet, and His Countenance lovely. Beware, however, of one thing, lest you begin to grow self-satisfied on account of this sweetness, and to think more of yourself than you ought, lest, whilst following after light, you encounter darkness, through the illusions of that sickness that destroyeth at noonday—the pride of the devil.”

You have now learnt, that for a man to lead a life of contemplation, he has to abandon other occupations, and manual labour, because occupation is opposed to rest, and is one of its great hindrances. Much business is hurtful in many ways, not only during the actual occupation, but also afterwards; it

fills the mind with anxiety and solitude as to what has been, or is to be done, and leaves its impress on our inner being which we cannot shake off, and therefore care and contemplation cannot co-exist.

CHAPTER LVI

Of Four Obstacles to Contemplation

NOW let us consider what are the hindrances to contemplation. There are four, of which S. Bernard thus speaks: "If it happens to any one to be drawn into the secret of contemplation, into this sanctuary of God; if he has the blessedness of being hidden therein, where no voice comes, no trouble, no disturbance from without, no anxious cares, no sad remorse, or what is still more difficult, no distracting images of earthly things; then, when he returns to himself, he may glory and say, 'The King brought me to His inner court.' " Thus S. Bernard.

The first obstacle is, then, the pain of the body. The soul is so closely bound to the flesh, that it cannot enter into and enjoy the delights of contemplation, when any part of the body is in pain. Thus, without a very special grace from God, the time of sickness is not the time of contemplation. It is the same if hunger, thirst, cold, or any other bodily need or suffering is keenly felt.

The second obstacle is gnawing care, anxiety as to needs and occupations; this is sufficiently demonstrated by the authorities which have been already quoted. The same writer says, enumerating elsewhere the hindrances to contemplation, that "as dust, cast into the eye, hinders us from seeing, so the anxieties of earthly cares trouble the eye of the soul, and prevent it from contemplating the true light."

The third obstacle is sad remorse; that is, the consciousness of sin. And this may happen in two ways: first, when sin is actually present in the soul; secondly, when the sin has been repented of and forgiven, but yet comes to remembrance. In either way contemplation is impeded, as S. Bernard declares, when he says, "As darkness hinders our corporeal vision; so sin, when it is in the soul, obstructs the spiritual life, for the soul is

overshadowed with darkness, and contemplation requires that the soul be in a state of purity and clearness. Likewise, as blood or any humour, if it gets into the eye, injures the sight; so sin, when it comes into the memory, flows into the soul and hinders its vision, and therefore the memory of past sins is to be avoided in the time of contemplation. Doubtless we ought at all times to regard ourselves as sinners; but we ought not, during contemplation, to fix our attention upon one of or upon all our faults.” Thus S. Bernard says, “Those who fairly represent Mary to us are those who have, by lapse of time and with the aid of Divine grace, made considerable progress in the spiritual life, and who now can commit themselves to Divine Indulgence, so as not to render themselves unquiet by the sad images of past sins, but who can joyously and safely meditate day and night on the law of God. Sometimes even with open face they behold the glory of the Spouse, and are perfectly transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Thus far S. Bernard.

The fourth obstacle he describes as the phantoms of corporeal images. This last is more difficult to be overcome than the others, and therefore solitude is especially recommended in contemplation. It behoveth the man who contemplates to be in some sense dumb, deaf, and blind, so that seeing he may not see, and hearing he may not hear, nor take delight in talking; that is, that he may be so withdrawn from transitory things, and so united to God, that he may not, by hearing, seeing, speaking, cease to contemplate, but that he may avoid interruption as much as possible. And if necessity obliges him to break off, he must not lay up in the soul those images of things which have passed through its windows. Consequently, it is not the duty of one who lives the Contemplative Life, as though he led the Active Life, to observe the conduct of his neighbours, lest he should store up causes of distractions. Much more careful should he be to abstain from conversation with worldly persons, as I have often taught. If, however, obedience, necessity, politeness, or recreation require him to do some work or action, let him do it with fidelity; but let him not cleave to it with his will, nor take such pleasure in it that he cannot afterwards shake off the images of it, and peacefully hold communion with God. Concerning this S. Bernard says, “We must do manual labour, not so much that by delight the soul should be detained thereby, but that all its delight may be reserved for spiritual exercises; a pause which is not for the purpose of dissipating the

mind, but to refresh it. Whence the soul should be able to return to devotion without hindrance, and without any conflict, without resistance of will, without having contracted any pleasure, or retained any image on the memory. As man was not made for woman, but woman for man; so neither were spiritual exercises made for bodily, but bodily for spiritual. Moreover, to man, when first created, there was made a help like unto himself, drawn from his own substance; so the help of bodily exercise is necessary for spiritual exercise; not, however, is there always the same likeness and affinity between them: as, for instance, between meditating on what is written and writing what is read. However, labour in the open air exhausts the mind oftentimes, when, by a too violent and rude exertion, the body is greatly reduced and broken, even to contrition or humility of heart. For the pain of fatigue often is the test of a more vehement devotion. Nevertheless a good and prudent servant will do all, whether labour or devotion, in right proportion; nor will he be dissipated in work, but will be gathered up into himself, because he will have always before his eyes, not so much what he does as his intention in doing it, and will direct all his actions to the last end.” Thus S. Bernard. You see with what care it behoves him to act, lest through manual labour he should allow his mind to become distracted. I know, indeed, what an impediment to contemplation you experience when you allow the mind to be the prey of anxious cares. This will suffice concerning the obstacles of contemplation.

From all which has gone before, you can judge how hurtful is that eager curiosity which infects the whole soul, rendering it unquiet and impure. How harmful, too, are cupidity and avarice; and how, on the contrary, precious is that poverty which can present the soul ever free and pure before God.

For the rest, be not disturbed, because I have said the contemplative do not give their thoughts to their neighbours; for such think more of God, and surpass the man of action in the love of God. But the active surpass him, again, in the love of their neighbour. S. Bernard expresses himself thus on this subject: “I say, by the grace of God which is in us, that we have vines and fig trees. The fig trees are those who are most sweet in manners: the vines are those who are most fervent in heart. Whoever lives sociably with us, not only avoids disputes in conversation, but endeavours to make himself pleasant by kind offices, is he not most aptly represented by the fig

tree?” Again, “Those are the vines who are more severe than complaisant, who are vehement of spirit, sticklers for discipline, declaimers against vice, and who can truly apply to themselves the Psalmist’s words, ‘Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee, and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?’ And, ‘The zeal of Thine house hath even consumed me.’ One shines most with the love of his neighbour, the other with the love of God.” Thus S. Bernard. You see, then, in the matter of zeal for God, the Contemplative are said to outstrip the Active. Understand this, however, discreetly: for the contemplative never omits the love of his neighbour; only he loves God principally, and his neighbour secondarily, within a certain limit. It is the duty of a new beginner to occupy himself as far as possible with God alone, to remain in solitude of spirit, and to be alone, so as even to appear to neglect the active service of God, of himself, and of his neighbour; since the nature of solitude demands this, especially when he is favoured with a visit from the Spouse; otherwise he may easily become distracted. But when he has become accustomed to the long exercises of contemplative prayer, then will he be filled with a burning zeal for God and for the salvation of souls, as we have before seen in the eighteenth sermon of S. Bernard on the Song of Solomon, in which is described the way the Contemplative precedes the second part of the Active Life. But more than this, in a case of urgent necessity, even the tyro will intermit his spiritual exercises for the benefit of his neighbours. Thus S. Bernard says, “When a man prays, who doubts but that he speaks to God? Yet how often, charity bidding, are we to be drawn away and torn away from God for the sake of any who may need our assistance or advice? How often is the pious rest in God to yield to the tumult of business? How often, with a good conscience, must the book be laid aside for manual toil? How often, for the administration of earthly matters, may we justly omit celebration? The order is reversed; but necessity has no law.” Thus S. Bernard.

CHAPTER LVII

The Contemplative is preferred to the Active Life

SEEING that S. Bernard, in Sermon LX. on the Song of Solomon, has, as we have already pointed out, stated that the Contemplative outstrips the Active Life in the love of God, it is evident that the Contemplative, on the whole, is represented as a more excellent life. Thus the same Saint says, “What does it mean, brethren, that it is said, Mary chose the better part? Where are the charges which we are prone to bring against her, if perhaps all the while she willed only to condemn, as beyond the occasion, the anxieties of Martha? Better is the churlishness of a man than a courteous woman. What becomes, then, of that saying, ‘If any man serve Me, him will My Father honour’? And again, ‘Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.’ In short, what comfort remains for the active sister, if we exalt the part of Mary, so as to take away all credit from her? One of these two ways we must solve the difficulty. Mary’s choice is to be praised, because her part ought to be chosen by all, as far as possible; or else we ought to find no fault in either, but remember that each in her vocation did the will of her Master. As David, who, going out and coming in, was ready to obey the orders of the King, cried out, ‘My heart is ready, my heart is ready.’ He made use of the expression twice, implying that his heart was ready for God, and for his neighbour’s service. That plainly is the best part which cannot be taken away; that plainly is the best state which suffers no change, and is ready for every call. But he also performs a good part who labours in active service well; and if his part is better who only waits upon God, yet his is best who unites both perfectly. However, I will add one observation, if, indeed, such a thing could for a moment be suspected in

Martha. Does she not, in asking her sister to help her, seem to charge her with neglect? But the carnal man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, if indeed he charges with idleness those who wait upon God. Let him hear that it is the best part, and abideth for ever. Does it not seem somewhat impertinent that those unpractised in the art of contemplation, should thus venture upon a region where the one thing needful is this occupation—this the one aim and the one life?”

Further, “Two things are required in the intention, which we have called the countenance of the soul—the object, and the cause; in other words, the purpose you have in view, and the reason for having it. By these two, the beauty or foulness of the soul may be easily discerned.” Again, “To apply ourselves to something else besides God, and yet, nevertheless, through it to act for God, is the work of Martha, not of Mary. Far be it from me to blame the soul that acts thus. Yet I do not affirm that the soul which thus labours has arrived at the perfection of beauty. Such a soul is anxious and troubled about many things, and cannot but be soiled with the dust of earthly occupations. But that which removes the stain easily and quickly is the hour’s contemplation before God, the chaste intention and the answer of a good conscience before Him. But to seek God only for the sake of Himself alone, this is to have both cheeks fair, to have both things required for a pure intention, to have the proper and distinctive mark of the spouse, who can by a singular prerogative apply these words, ‘Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels.’

“Solitude and seclusion are names of misery; but our place of seclusion should not be one of constraint, but a dwelling-place of peace; the closed door, not that of a prison, but of a happy retreat. He who lives in communion with God, is never less alone than when alone. It is then, in effect, that he is able freely to enjoy his happiness. When he is alone, he can enjoy God in himself, and himself in God. Then in the light of truth, in the clear serenity of a clean heart, the pure conscience will freely open itself before Him, the memory will be filled with the thought of God, the understanding will be illumined, the heart will dilate itself with the enjoyment of the supreme good, so that human frailty will freely weep over its faults. This is the object of this vocation, not to be confined on earth, but to dwell in Heaven—the world ever excluded, that you may be, as it were,

enclosed in God.” “It is not idleness to rest in God; it is the business of all businesses.” Thus S. Bernard.

By these quotations it will be seen that the Contemplative Life is considered superior to the Active: you have elsewhere other authorities on this subject which tend to the same view in this treatise, and especially in the chapter on the way our Lord fled from the multitude when they would have made Him a king, and from the thirty-second sermon of S. Bernard on the Song of Songs.

But which of these two kinds of life has the more worth? God knows. Believe, however, that those who have the greater love have the greater reward; but in the Contemplative Life it seems that the love of God preponderates. Its greatness consists in beholding God, enjoying God, conversing with God, knowing His will—all this appertains to the man of contemplation. The Contemplative Life is, indeed, a sort of foretaste of the Reward of our Eternal Country, however imperfectly or rarely this is realized. And as this, the Saints seem to have regarded it, and to have given it the higher place. But what does our Lord will concerning both these kinds of life. That as in one body there are many members, and all have not the same office, so we may serve God in His Church in divers manners; the same Spirit is not given to all, “for to one is given the word of wisdom,” etc. Let each one, then, remain in that vocation in which he was called: he that is fitted for contemplation, let him remain in it; and he who devotes himself to the service of others, let him abide in it. For the Lord, as He had said of Mary, that she had chosen the better part, so did He enjoin upon S. Peter, after the third time He had questioned his love for Him, that he should feed His sheep. And it is in this sense that S. Bernard is to be understood, when he says, “that Martha received the Lord into her house, because to her was entrusted the management of the house. Let all other helpers receive Christ according to the kind of ministry which they exercise; let them receive Christ, serve Christ, minister to Him in His members. This one, in sick brethren; that one, in the poor; this one, in exercising hospitality towards guests and strangers: and all the while they are thus occupied in their various services, let Mary wait upon the Lord in stillness, seeing and tasting how sweet the Lord is.” Thus S. Bernard.

You, then, if your state of life demand it, embrace with all your strength the Contemplative Life; but let the Active Life precede it, and conduct you

to it. Rejoice and give thanks to the Lord Jesus, you who are called to that part, which He calls the best.

CHAPTER LVIII

Of Three Causes, on account of which one ought to return from the Contemplative into the Active Life. Also how Faith without Works is dead

ALTHOUGH it has been several times touched upon, that in contemplation nothing should be sought but to wait upon God, and all else should be set aside, it must be remembered that this holds good only generally, but not always. For there are three reasons for which the sweet repose of contemplation should be for a time abandoned, and the Active Life entered upon.

The first cause is the good of souls, as you have seen above, in the chapter entitled “How the Contemplative Life precedes the Active,” from the eighteenth and sixty-second sermons of S. Bernard on the Canticles. S. Bernard says also, “ ‘Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.’ The Spouse testifies His great affection by the repetition of those terms of affection; for such repetition is a mark of love. And that He again calls the beloved to labour in the vineyard, shows His great anxiety for the salvation of souls. For the vines, you must know, are the souls.” And further on, “Yet, if I mistake not, I have not yet once named the Bride, but now, when she is to go to the vines, that they may produce the wine of charity.” Thus S. Bernard. The Bride, knowing the will of the Bridegroom, who is glowing with zeal for souls, goes forth at the time when there is need to labour, and afterwards returns to contemplation.

Another reason for interrupting contemplation, is some pressing duty. Thus, some one has to see to those under his charge, and therefore omits it.

On this point S. Bernard says, speaking of his monks who tormented him by continual interruptions, "Rarely do I get an hour's peace, because of their continual applications." "I lay aside my devotion, lest I should give the appearance of impatience to the weak, for they are the Lord's little ones who believe in Him, and I would not allow them to take offence from me. I may not use this power, but rather let them use me as it pleases them, if only they may be saved. They will spare me, if they have not spared me; and I shall repose in the thought that they have not feared to disturb me for their necessities. I will do all I can for them, and in them I will serve my God, continuing to do so with charity unfeigned. I will not seek my own, nor will I consider what is profitable for myself. This only will I ask, that my service may be acceptable and fruitful, if haply I may thus be able in the evil day to find mercy before the eyes of their Father." He says further, what bears upon both these causes of interruption, "I speak to you of my own experience; if I have found that my advice is of service to any one, I have always been ready to forego my own rest and quiet. Thus, for instance, when, after speaking, I find the angry become meek, the proud humble, the weak brave; or else, those already meek, humble, and strong make progress in their respective graces, and become conscious of some improvement; or if those who are perhaps lukewarm and dull about Divine things, are re-quickened by the fire of the Divine Word, and seem to wake out of their sleep; or if those, who have deserted the fountain of wisdom, and hewn out for themselves cisterns of self-will which can hold no water, murmuring at every injunction, and complaining that the springs of devotion are dried up within their hearts, are brought back to the Fount again; if those, I say, prove that they have been refreshed by the dew of the Divine Word and by the gracious rain which God hath poured upon His inheritance, by becoming obedient and devout in all things: in such instances, I have never regretted interrupting the joy of contemplation. When I have found myself surrounded with such flowers and fruits of piety, I permitted myself patiently to be drawn from the embrace, as it were, of the sterile Rachel, to gather abundant fruits from Leah in the spiritual advancement of others. No, indeed, I regret not giving up my own delight and repose, to speak to others, when I see seed which I have sown germinate in them, or the fruits of righteousness increase. For 'charity seeketh not her own,' and thus persuades me easily to prefer the benefit of others to the gratification of my

own desires. To pray, read, write, meditate, and all the other benefits of spiritual exercises, I have counted them all but loss on account of you.” Thus S. Bernard.

The third reason for leaving contemplation is, when the soul, through the withdrawal of the Spouse (no unwonted experience), perceives no longer its accustomed consolations. For the Spouse goes and comes as He will, as you have learnt from Chapter XXXV., entitled “How the Lord withdrew, when the Multitude wanted to make Him a King.” When, then, He retires, the soul languishes with desire, and recalls Him with all her might, as the spouse in the Canticles: “Return, return, my well-beloved.” And when He does not at once return, she calls His companions, that is, the angels, and says, “I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell Him that I am sick of love.” If He does not deign to return, the soul, knowing thereby the will of the Spouse, returns to active employment, thus to produce fruits for the Spouse. The man of contemplation knows not idleness. Thus the spouse says, “Stay me with flowers, compass me with apples, for I languish with love.” Concerning this, S. Bernard says, “The flower is faith, the fruit is good works. You observe the order is true to the similitude: faith precedes works, as flowers go before fruits. ‘Without faith, it is impossible to please God,’ according to the testimony of S. Paul; and further, ‘Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.’ Thus no fruit without the flower, no good work without faith; ‘faith,’ on the other hand, ‘without works is dead,’ like unto the useless flower which bears no fruit. Therefore, of good works, faith unfeigned is the root; and the soul, accustomed to contemplation, will receive consolation, as often as the light of contemplation is for the time withdrawn. Who is there, I will not say continually, but even for a long time, during this life in the body, enjoys the light of contemplation? But, as I have said, as often as any one falls from contemplation, he should betake himself to the Active Life; for the two are not far apart, they are companions, nay, sisters, living in the same dwelling, like Martha and Mary. Moreover, if one falls from the brightness of contemplation, one must not suffer oneself to roll over into the darkness of sin or the idleness of sloth; but we must remain in the light of good works, for you know good works have also a light. ‘Let your light’ (says our Lord) ‘shine before men;’ that is, the light of the good works which they behold in you.” Thus far S. Bernard.

Here, then, are the three reasons for which the sweetness of contemplation should be left, and the Active Life resumed, altogether against the choice of the Contemplative, but in accordance with the dispensation of God. And you have to remark, that contemplation must only be omitted for a time, and be returned to again. This is a further evidence that the Contemplative excels the Active Life.

Well, then, thanks be to God! We have concluded this treatise on Contemplation. It is a matter of some length, but very useful; and you can draw from it many other lessons on the exercises of the spiritual life in general. Therefore read it diligently, and try to accomplish faithfully what is prescribed; and remember that the teaching in this treatise is not mine, but S. Bernard's. What I have said will be sufficient for your purpose

CHAPTER LIX

How the Lord said to the Jews that the Church should pass to the Gentiles, and depicted this by the Parable of the Husbandmen in the Vineyard who killed the Son of their Lord

OUR Lord and Redeemer, zealous for the salvation of souls, for whom He had come to lay down His life, sought by every means to draw them to Himself and to rescue them from the jaws of the enemy. Wherefore sometimes He used bland and lowly words, sometimes words of reproof and severity; sometimes examples and parables; sometimes threats and terrors: He varied his methods and remedies of salvation according to place, time, and audience. Thus, against the rulers and Pharisees He employed stern words, and a terrible example, though one just and true, that left them no escape. He proposes to them a parable of husbandmen in a vineyard, who killed the messengers of their Lord, who came to receive the fruits; and afterwards they killed His Son. Then He asked, what punishment they deserved to receive from their master? They replied, “He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out His vineyard to other husbandmen.” Jesus, approving their answer, thus applied it: “The kingdom of God, that is, the Church, shall be taken away from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof;” that is, to the Gentiles, of whom we are, and the universal Church. Moreover, He introduced the similitude of a corner-stone, which signified Himself, and which should grind the Jews to powder. And then they understood that the parable pointed to them, and the

effect was, not their correction, but their increased anger, for their “malice had blinded them.” Behold, then, Christ, in this scene, humbly indeed sitting amongst these Pharisees, but speaking with authority and power, and in the power of His might telling them of their own fate.

CHAPTER LX

How they sought to entrap Jesus in His Words

AS in many ways the Lord Jesus endeavoured to effect the salvation of the Jews, so on the other hand they in many ways sought to slander and destroy Him. They thought to deceive Him, but the “searchers failed in their search.” Then they planned to send their disciples with the Herodians, to find out whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? For they thought by this means they would make him odious, either to Cæsar, or to the people of the Jews; because either way His answer would condemn Himself. But the Discerner of hearts, knowing their wickedness, replied, that they should “render to Cæsar the things of Cæsar, and unto God the things of God;” and called them hypocrites, because their words were fair, but their heart was deceitful. They, therefore, frustrated in their purpose, withdrew ashamed. Regard our Lord attentively, as we have before advised; consider the teaching, that it is not His will that persons in authority should be defrauded of their temporal rights. Wherefore it is a sin, and forbidden, not to pay rates, taxes, or dues of any kind which are rightly levied by the temporal powers.

CHAPTER LXI

Of the Blind Man at Jericho, and many other Things

OUR most gracious Lord, Who, out of the excess of His charity, came down from the Father's Bosom for our salvation, knowing that the time of His Passion was at hand, prepared Himself for it by going up to Jerusalem, where He was to suffer it. At that time, by His Divinity, He predicted it; but He was not understood. When, then, He drew near to Jericho, a certain blind man, who sat and begged by the wayside, who was told by the crowd that Jesus was passing by, began to cry out loudly for mercy; and, although he was rebuked by the crowd, he was not abashed and would not hold his peace. To his faith and fervour the Lord Jesus gave heed, and commanded him to be led to Him, and said to him, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" O most sweet utterance! "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" And the blind man said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." And the merciful Lord granted his petition, saying, "Receive thy sight." And He healed him. Contemplate the Lord Jesus as He thus acted, and dwell upon His graciousness.

Give your thoughts also, in this place, to the power of faith and of prayer, and how importunity in prayer does not displease God; on the contrary, He delights in it, as you have seen in the case of the woman of Canaan. And in this place Christ teaches that "men ought always to pray and not to faint," illustrating this truth by the conduct of a judge from whom a widow obtained her request through importunity. Elsewhere He gives another instance, in the case of one who granted loaves at night through the importunity of the petitioner. Then, to those who persevere in prayer, our Lord grants their petitions when they seek that which is right and just from

God, so that to each He says, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" and then He does it. Yes, indeed, often He does more than we ask, or venture to ask of Him, as in the instance of Zacchæus, of whom we shall treat presently. Therefore, you have it as a certainty, that whatsoever you faithfully and perseveringly ask of God you shall obtain. Neither ought you to be ashamed, for neither the blind man, nor the Canaanite, nor Zacchæus, were ashamed to ask favours of God; and they obtained them. So neither ought we to be ashamed of the service of God, and to lay aside our sin, and to seek from God necessary graces. For to have bashfulness and shame, appertains either to great virtue or to great vice. Of which S. Bernard says, "There is a shame which bringeth sin, and there is a shame which bringeth glory. Good is the shame which hinders you from sinning, or which you feel on account of having sinned. And although no human judge be present, yet will you more chastely revere the Divine Presence when you consider how infinitely more pure God is than man, and that He is the more deeply offended by the sinner, because sin is something so alien to Himself. A shame of this kind does doubtless chase away reproach and bring glory; seeing that it will not admit sin on any terms, or, if it has been allowed, expels it by repenting of it and confessing it; for our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience. On the other hand, if any one is ashamed to confess his sins, and thus endures the burden of a guilty conscience, such a shame leads to sin, and robs the conscience of its glory; for the evil which is in the depth of the heart compunction tries to expel, but a foolish shame locks the lips and will not allow it egress." Again, "O shame, devoid of reason, enemy of salvation, stranger to honour and honesty." "Is it, then, a shame for a man to be overcome by God? is it counted a reproach to be humbled under the Mighty Hand of the Most High?" And again, "The highest kind of victory is to yield to the Divine Majesty, and not to struggle against the authority of our Mother, the Church. O perversity, we are not ashamed to soil our feet, but we are ashamed to cleanse them! 'There is a shame,' according to the Wise Man, 'which bringeth glory,' if we are ashamed to sin, or to have sinned; nor indeed will it lack glory, if shame restores what sin hath lost." "I know not anything in the human character more pleasing than bashfulness." And then he adds, "It is certainly the ornament of every age; but in those of tender years, this delicate grace of shamefacedness is especially manifest. What more attractive than youthful

bashfulness? How bright and beautiful is this moral gem in the face and manners of youth! How true and sure an index of a good disposition, the presage of a hopeful future! The rod of discipline is exercised in ruling the affections, repressing youthful passions, restraining from the slightest evil whether of act or desire. What else puts to flight every improper word and utterance? Shame is the sister of chastity. It is the shining lamp of a pure mind; so that nothing low or vile enters into it or proceeds from it. It gives no quarter to evil, and is the protector of native purity, the special glory of the conscience, the guardian of a good name, the ornament of a life, the throne of virtue, the first of graces, the commendation of nature, the sign of all that is honourable. The blush upon the cheek which bashfulness may chance to bring, what grace and beauty does it not add to the countenance? Shame is so innate in the human mind, that those who are not ashamed to do evil are ashamed to be seen to do it.” “Hiding works in darkness, and those which are worthy of being hidden.” “What so grateful to a bashful disposition as retirement? If we pray, we are bidden to enter into our closet, that we may pray in secret. But this is ordered also as a precaution, lest, in the very act of praying, human praise should steal the fruit of the prayer, and mar our affection. But what so fitting for shame as the evidence of praise and boasting?” And, a little further on, “What so indecorous, especially in the young, as an ostentatious piety.” “It is a good commendation of the prayer we are going to make, if it is preceded by shamefacedness.” Thus far S. Bernard.

What comes under the consideration of this miracle may be applied to the case of two other blind men, to whom our Lord gave sight when He was going out of Jericho. But the blind man of whom we are speaking received sight as our Lord was entering the city. You can read about the others in S. Matthew and S. Mark, where the name of one is given. For they cried to our Lord in the same way, and were heard by Him, and received their sight.

CHAPTER LXII

How the Lord entered the House of Zacchæus

WHEN the Lord Jesus entered the city of Jericho, and was walking through it, Zacchæus, the chief among the publicans, having heard of this, was exceedingly desirous of seeing Him, but was unable to do so because of the crowd, and because he was little of stature. Therefore he climbed up into a sycamore tree, so that he might be able to see Him. But Jesus, knowing and accepting his faith and desire, said, “Zacchæus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide in thy house.” Then he came down, and received Him with great joy and reverence, and prepared a great feast for Him. You have seen the graciousness of the Lord Jesus. He grants Zacchæus more than he asks. He grants him Himself a favour he had never ventured to ask. Here, then, you have an instance of the virtue of prayer. For desire is a strong cry and a great prayer. Thus the Prophet says, “The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor. Thine ear hath heard the preparation of their heart.” And to Moses God said, “Wherefore criest thou to Me?” when he had not opened his lips, but he had spoken with his heart.

Behold our Lord, then, sitting and eating with sinners. He seats Himself in the midst by the side of Zacchæus, and honours, it may be, some one by putting him at the head; then He converses familiarly and sociably with them, in order to draw them to Himself. See the disciples also, readily conversing with the same sinners, talking with them, and encouraging them to lead a better life. For they know that this is the will of their Master, and they too desired the salvation of these men.

CHAPTER LXIII

Of the Healing of the Man who was Blind from his Birth

WHEN the Lord Jesus was going to Jerusalem, He saw a man who had been born blind, whose name tradition says was Cælidonius. The lowly Lord, stooping down, made clay with spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man, and sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam. He went, and washed, and came seeing. The miracle was seriously called in question by those malevolent men—much to their own confusion. See the history of this event in the Gospel, for it is sufficiently clear and beautiful. But in all this, fix your eyes on our Lord according to the directions we have before given; consider, too, how great was the gratitude of the blind man, who so manfully and persistently took the part of our Lord, before the very chiefs and elders of the Jews, and spared them in no word, though he had not yet seen Jesus. Very praiseworthy is the virtue of gratitude and acceptable to God, whilst the vice of ingratitude is detestable. Of this subject S. Bernard thus writes: “Learn to give thanks for every benefit individually. Diligently think on all you receive from Him, so that no gift may be deprived of its rightful acknowledgment, whether it be great, moderate, or small. Lastly, we are bidden to gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost; that is, that the least favour may not be forgotten. For may not that be said to perish which is given to the ungrateful? Ingratitude is the enemy to the soul, the evacuation of merits, the dispersion of virtues, the destruction of all that is good. Ingratitude is a burning wind, drying up the springs of piety, the dew of pity, the streams of grace.” Thus S. Bernard.

CHAPTER LXIV

How our Lord fled from the Temple, and hid Himself, when the Jews sought to stone Him

BEHOLD, now the mysteries of our Lord's Passion begin. Therefore, I shall from this time rarely quote any authorities, that I may the more readily give the history of the Passion and of all that led to it. When, then, on a certain occasion the Lord Jesus was preaching in the Temple, and said, among other things, "If any man keep My saying, he shall never taste of death," they replied, "Art Thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead?" And the Lord Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am." From which saying taking offence, as at something false or impossible, they took up stones to cast at Him. But He hid Himself, and went out of the Temple. For the hour of His Passion had not yet arrived. Regard our Lord, then, with deep compassion, how He, the Lord of all, was set at nought by these most wicked servants; and how, desirous of avoiding their fury, He hides Himself in some part of the Temple, behind some pillar, or amongst the people. Behold Him and His disciples, sorrowfully departing, with downcast look, as if feeble and defenceless.

CHAPTER LXV

How, at another Time, they wanted to stone Jesus

WHEN, on another occasion, the Lord Jesus, at the Feast of Dedication of the Temple, was in Solomon's porch, those ravenous wolves surrounded Him, with the greatest fury, gnashing with their teeth, and saying, "How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly?" But the most meek Lamb answered them humbly, saying, "I told you and ye believed not. The works which I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me." Contemplate Him at this moment, and all that happened, as before God. He Himself speaks to them in accents of humility; but they, with the fury of so many barking "dogs," roared at Him, and hemmed Him in on all sides; when they could no longer conceal the malice of their hearts. They, then, took up stones to cast at Him. But the Lord Jesus, nevertheless, most blandly addressed them, saying, "Many good works have I showed you; for which of those works do you stone Me?" They, amongst other things, replied, "Because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God." See their incredible madness! They wish Him to manifest Himself, and then because He does, both by word and deed, they seek to stone Him. Neither had they any excuse, for they could, and should, believe the Lord Jesus to be the Son of God. Because, however, His hour was not yet come, He escaped out of their hands, and retired beyond Jordan to a place where John baptized, which is distant from Jerusalem about eighteen miles; and there He abode with His disciples. Behold Him, then, and His disciples as they sorrowfully depart, and compassionate them with all your power.

CHAPTER LXVI

Concerning the Resurrection of Lazarus

THE present miracle is a very celebrated one, and affords much matter for serious thought; therefore give your whole attention to it, as if you were present and heard the words and saw the actions. Hold converse in spirit, not only with our Lord and His disciples, but with the members of that blessed family, so dear to the Lord and so devoted to Him; Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. Then Lazarus, being sick, the sisters, who were very intimate friends of our Lord, sent to Him to the place whither he had retired, namely, beyond Jordan, as we related in the previous chapter, saying, “Lazarus, our brother, whom Thou lovest, is sick.” They said no more, either because this was enough to one Who loved, and Who understood all; or, because they feared to ask Him to come to them, knowing that the elders of the Jews were lying in wait for Him, and desirous to kill Him. But the Lord Jesus, having received the message, remained silent for two days; after that, He said to His disciples, among other things, “Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there.” See the wonderful goodness and kindness of our Lord, and His concern for His disciples. They were yet standing in need of greater strength and virtue; wherefore He was ever seeking to act with a view to their advancement. Then they returned, and came to Bethany. Now, Martha, when she knew this, went forth to meet Him, and falling at His feet, said, “Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” But our Lord replied, that he should rise again; and then they conversed together on the resurrection. Then our Lord sent her for Mary, whom He loved with singular affection. And she, when she knew this, arose quickly, and came to Him, and fell down at His feet, saying like words to those which Martha had spoken. But the Lord Jesus, seeing His beloved friend in deep affliction, and in tears on account of the loss of her

brother, was not able to restrain His own tears. Whereupon "Jesus wept." Contemplate Him, and the sisters, and the disciples. Do you not suppose that they wept also? After a few moments, all thus weeping, the Lord Jesus said, "Where have ye laid him?" He Himself knew this already, but He spoke as man. Then they said, "Lord, come and see." And they led Him to the grave. The Lord Jesus, we may imagine, then walks between the two sisters, comforting and strengthening them. And they were so consoled by His presence, that, as if unmindful of their sorrow and of all else, they fixed their attention solely on Him. While the three talked together by the way; Magdalen, we can picture, saying, "Lord, how hast Thou been since Thou hast left us? I had bitter sorrow at Thy departure, and now when I heard of Thy return, I had great joy, yet I feared, yea, I fear, greatly. For Thou knowest how our chiefs and elders are plotting against Thee, and therefore we did not venture to ask Thee to come. I rejoice that Thou hast come; but I pray you, before God, do not expose yourself to their snares." And the Lord, we can conceive, would answer, "Do not fear; My Father will provide for these things." And thus conversing together, they reached the tomb. Then the Lord Jesus commanded the stone, which was placed upon it, to be taken off. But Martha demurred, saying, "Lord, he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days." O God, behold how wonderful is the love of these two sisters for the Lord Jesus. They would not that anything offensive should be endured by Him. However, none the less did the Lord insist on the stone being lifted up. Which being done, our Lord Jesus, with eyes raised towards heaven, said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I know that Thou hearest Me always; but because of these people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me." Behold our Lord thus praying, and consider his zeal for the salvation of souls. Then He cried with a loud voice, saying, "Lazarus, come forth." And he immediately came back to life and stood forth, though as yet bound hand and foot. The disciples then, at the command of Christ, loose him. When loosed his sisters fall on their knees and give thanks to our Lord, Jesus for His so great benefit, and then they take him home. Those who were there and witnessed these things, wondered; and the miracle was blazed abroad, so that a great concourse of people from Jerusalem and other parts came to see Lazarus. But the rulers of the Jews, considering themselves baffled, began to plan Christ's death.

CHAPTER LXVII

Of the Cursing of the Fig Tree

ALTHOUGH, according to the letter of history, the cursing of the fig tree, and the presentation of the woman taken in adultery, are believed to have taken place after the entry of our Lord into Jerusalem, when He rode upon an ass; yet it seems more fitting that we should meditate upon nothing after that event, but His Supper and Passion, and the circumstances of those mysteries, and therefore I have thought it well to deal with the two former subjects in this place.

When, then, our Lord Jesus went towards Jerusalem, and was suffering from hunger, he saw a fig tree, beautiful and leafy, in the way. But coming to it, and finding no figs upon it, He cursed it. And immediately it withered away, so that the disciples marvelled. Behold our Lord, then, and His disciples, according to the suggestions which I have before made. Consider, also, that this was a mystical act on the part of our Lord, for He knew that the time of figs was not yet. By this tree, full of leaves, we may understand men who have plenty of words but no deeds; also hypocrites and dissemblers, who, having a fair outside, are inwardly empty and fruitless.

CHAPTER LXVIII

Of the Woman taken in Adultery

THOSE vile rulers and Pharisees were ever, in their malice, on the watch against the Lord Jesus, and anxiously took counsel together how they might overcome Him by stratagem and conceit, and render Him odious to the people. But their arrows were hurled back upon themselves. When, then, a certain woman was taken in adultery, and ought, according to the law, to be stoned, they brought her to Him in the Temple, and asked Him what should be done with her, desirous of placing Him in a difficulty. For had He decided that the law should be observed, they would have charged Him with cruelty and mercilessness; and if, on the other hand, he had decided that the law should not be observed, they would have charged Him with lawlessness. But the wise Lord saw their snares, and knew how to avoid them; and thus He humbly stooped down, and wrote with His finger on the ground. The old commentary says, He wrote down their sins. That writing was of such power that each of them recognized their sins thereby. Then our Lord, raising Himself up, said, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” And again He stooped down—this gracious Lord, considerate even towards those who envied and hated Him, lest they should be too much abashed. But they went out from His presence, and so their deceitfulness was frustrated. The Lord Jesus then warned the woman not to sin any more, and let her go. Behold Him, then, attentively in all these deeds and words.

CHAPTER LXIX

Of the Conspiracy of the Jews against Jesus, and of His Flight into the City of Ephraim

THE time approaching in which the Lord Jesus determined to effect our Redemption by the shedding of His Blood, the Devil armed his ministers and sharpened their malice against our Lord, even to make them thirst for His death. The good works of our Lord, and especially the raising of Lazarus, more and more inflamed them against Him, until they were consumed with envy. Not being able to put off their revenge, the chief priests and Pharisees at once held a council, in which, at the prophecy of Caiaphas, they deliberated upon the death of the most innocent Lamb. O wicked council! O most infamous leaders of the people, most wretched counsellors! What are you doing, miserable men? What so great fury drives you on? What determination is this you arrive at? What reason is there for the death of our Lord God? Is He not in the midst of you, Whom you knew not, knowing all your words, searching your reins and hearts? But thus it must be as you desire; the Father hath delivered Him into your hands; by you He shall be slain, but you shall not profit thereby; He indeed shall die and rise again, that He may save His people from their sins, and you will perish.

The decision of the council was noised abroad, but the prudent Lord willed to give place to anger, and because all things were not yet done, He departed into the region near the desert, to the city of Ephraim; and thus the humble Lord flies before the face of His most wicked servants. Contemplate those wicked men, raging against Him in their abominable council. Behold, also, the Lord Jesus retiring with His disciples, like poor and helpless men. What, think you, said the Magdalen at this? And what

were the feelings of our Lord's mother, who might have seen Him thus depart, and have known the cause, that they wanted to kill Him? You can imagine her and the holy women remaining with Magdalen, and our Lord, before His departure, consoling them by the promise of His quick return.

CHAPTER LXX

How the Lord Jesus returned to Bethany, where Mary Magdalen anointed His Feet

As, at a former time, the Lord Jesus, for our instruction, used prudence, in fleeing, showing how there are places and occasions, when we ought warily to avoid the fury of our persecutors; so now He uses fortitude, because His time had come. Thus He returns of His own accord, to offer Himself for His Passion, and that He might deliver Himself up into the hands of His enemies. Thus on another occasion He employed temperance, when He avoided the honour which the crowds wanted to thrust upon Him, in making Him a king. On the other hand, He displayed justice, when He received the honour which was due to Him as a king, as the people went forth to meet Him with branches cut down from the trees, and He willed to allow this simple triumph, and therefore He rode upon an ass, as S. Bernard says. These four virtues, prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice, the Lord of Virtues for our sakes made use of. They are called cardinal, or chief, because from them all other moral virtues flow. By no means, therefore, is our Lord to be considered variable, as no one of us would be, if on different occasions we exercised different virtues.

The Lord Jesus, then, on the Sabbath day before Palm Sunday, returns to Bethany, which is not far from Jerusalem, that is about two miles; and there they made Him a supper, in the house of Simon the leper; but Lazarus, Martha, and Mary were also there, who were, perhaps, relations, or at least on intimate terms with Simon. Then Mary poured upon His Head a pound of precious ointment, and with it anointed His Head and His Feet. This deed, which she had once done in the same house out of contrition, she did now from the motive of devotion. For she loved Him above all things, and

could never do enough to serve Him. But Judas, the traitor, murmured at this. Whereupon the Lord replied to him, and defended her, as was right. Nevertheless the traitor remained indignant, and from thence took occasion to betray Him; and on the Wednesday following, he sold the Lord Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. See, then, our Lord, sitting at supper with His friends, and conversing with them during the short time which elapsed before His Passion. But further, see Him in the house of Lazarus, in that house of him and of his sister, which was His ordinary shelter. There He eat by day, and slept at night with His disciples. There, haply, His Blessed Mother also rested with the sisters, for she was greatly honoured by all, and Magdalen, we may imagine, clung to her, and could by no means be torn from her. Behold the Virgin Mother, filled with fear for her most beloved Son, from that time never voluntarily perhaps quitting His Presence. And when the Lord, defending Magdalen from the murmuring of the betrayer, said, "In that she hath poured this ointment on My Body, she did it for My burial," do you not suppose that the sword of this word pierced through His mother's heart? For how could He more expressly speak of His Death? Likewise, all the rest were terrified with fear, and full of anxious surmisings, speaking one with another, now here, now there, as people speak who have some terrible communication to make. But their fear reached its height when He went into Jerusalem, which He did daily. For from that Sabbath to the Supper, He spake much to the Jews, and did many works openly in Jerusalem, to which I intend to make no reference, save to His Entry when riding on an ass; lest our meditations concerning Himself be interrupted, for we are on the very threshold of the Passion. Take heed, then, and gather up all your powers, so as to avoid all distraction, that you may thus be enabled to meditate well on the mysteries which precede the Passion, as well as on the Passion itself, with a mind free from cares, and very attentive; in the meanwhile, converse freely at Bethany with those who are assembled there.

CHAPTER LXXI

Of our Lord's Entry into Jerusalem upon an Ass; and how on some occasions Jesus is said to have wept

THIS time is rich in mysteries; the Scriptures are now to be fulfilled by the Lord Jesus; the time is at hand, and He burns to bring a remedy to this sinful world through the suffering of His own Body. Therefore the day following, very early in the morning, which was the Lord's day, He prepared Himself in a new and unusual manner to enter Jerusalem, but as it had been prophesied of Him. When He was about to start, we can imagine His mother with pious tenderness wanting to retain Him. "My Son, wilt Thou go! You know how they will conspire against Thee, when you are among them. I pray that You may not go." Likewise to His disciples, it seemed intolerable that He should go, and they, too, would do anything to deter Him. We can imagine, too, Magdalen saying, "Lord, do not go; they seek to kill Thee. If You get into their hands, to-day they will take Thee, and be able to carry out their designs." O God! how they loved Him, and how bitter to them was everything that would hurt Him. But He had disposed it otherwise, and was athirst for the salvation of the world, and answered them, "It is the will of My Father that I should go. Come, fear not, for He is our defence, and in the evening we shall return safe and sound." Then the Lord began to go, and His few and faithful friends accompanied Him.

But when He had arrived at Bethphage, a small village on the way, He sent two of His disciples to Jerusalem, to bring to Him an ass and her foal, which were bound in a certain place, set apart for the use of the poor. Which

having been done, the Lord Jesus mounted, first upon the ass, and then upon the colt, humbly, and the disciples placed their garments upon them. And thus rode the Lord of the world. And though most just was it that He should be honoured, yet at the time of honour, such were His attendants, such His adornments. Behold him, then, attentively, and see how, in the midst of receiving honour, He reproved the vain pomp of the world. The animals were adorned with no bridles of gold, no ornamented harness with trappings of silk, after the manner of the folly of the world, but with poor clothes, and with two small cords; though He was the King of kings and Lord of lords. Yet the crowds, when they knew that He was approaching, went out to meet Him, and received Him as a king with acclamations and songs of joy, with the strewing of garments and of branches from the trees, and with great gladness. But with their joy He mingled weeping. For when He beheld Jerusalem, He wept over it, saying, "If thou hadst known," etc., thou, also, wouldst weep.

You must know that we read that the Lord Jesus wept three times. Once at the death of Lazarus, in witnessing human misery; once on this occasion, at human blindness and ignorance. For here He wept, "because they knew not the time of their visitation." On a third time He wept, at human sin and malice, because He foresaw, that though His Passion sufficed for all, yet all would not profit from it, for some would be reprobate, hard-hearted, and impenitent. Of this weeping the Apostle speaks, when writing to the Hebrews. He says, "Who, with strong crying and tears, was heard in that He feared;" for the text includes these three occasions. But the Church holds that He wept at another time, namely, as an Infant, and therefore she sings, "The Infant weeps," etc. And this might have taken place, to hide from the devil the mystery of the Incarnation. Contemplate Him, then, now weeping, and you ought, indeed, to weep with Him; for He weeps abundantly and strongly, for it was no feigned sorrow, but a true grief with Him. Wherefore with bitter heart He wept over their eternal loss. He predicted also their temporal ruin.

Behold, then, His disciples, who faithfully kept near Him, with fear and reverence; these are His barons and counts, His attendants and guards. Think, also, of His mother, with Magdalen and the other women, as following after Him. And suppose not, that when He wept, His mother and His disciples refrained from tears.

The Lord Jesus, then, entered into the city, with such triumph, and amid such honour from the crowds, that the whole city was moved. Whereupon He went into the Temple, and cast out the buyers and sellers. This was the second time He did this. After that, the Lord Jesus stood and publicly taught the people in the Temple, and answered the chief priests and Pharisees even till evening. And though He had received such honours, there was no one found to offer Him hospitality. The whole day, then, He and His disciples remained fasting, and then late in the evening returned to Bethany. Behold Him, as now He leaves the city in a very humble condition; but few went forth with Him, Who was in the morning conducted into the city attended with such honours. From which occurrence you may gather the lesson, how little should we care for the honours of the world, which are so short-lived. You may imagine how Magdalen rejoiced, and the others, when they saw their Lord honoured by the crowds, and how much more, when He and His disciples returned safe and sound to Bethany.

CHAPTER LXXII

How we may depict the Lord Jesus, revealing to His Mother His approaching Death

THIS is a beautiful subject for meditation, though we have no record of it in Holy Scripture. We can imagine our Lord, as on the Wednesday He took supper with His disciples, in the house of Mary and Martha; His mother and the holy women being in another part of the house, and Magdalen, who served, asking Him, saying, “Master, let us know that You will keep the Passover with us; I pray Thee, do not refuse us.” To which our Lord could by no means assent, as He was about to keep the Passover at Jerusalem. Then Magdalen, retiring in tears, might be depicted as going to Christ’s mother, and laying before her the desire which she had revealed to our Lord, that she might ask Him.

Then, supper being ended, imagine the Lord Jesus returning to His mother, and conversing with her at her side, affording her the delight of His presence, which was so soon to be withdrawn. Behold them, in spirit, conversing together, our Lord and His mother; see her reverence and affection for Him. Then Magdalen goes to them, and throws herself at His feet, and repeats her request, saying, that our Lord will fall into the hands of His enemies, if He goes to Jerusalem for the Passover. Whereupon His mother, with a mother’s tenderness, beseeches Him, if it may be, that He should not go, because of the snares which were laid to take Him at Jerusalem. And the Lord, we can conceive, replying, “Mother, most beloved, it is the will of My Father that I should keep the Passover there, because the time of Redemption has come, and now all things must be fulfilled which are written of Me, and they shall do to Me what they will.” But the holy women heard these things with an intensity of sorrow, for they

well understood that He spake of His death. At this, we can imagine that Christ's mother was deeply moved. "My Son," we can hear her say, in broken utterances, "I am overwhelmed with grief and my heart has failed me;" yet was she content to leave all in the Father's hands, only desirous, naturally, for a little delay, that they might keep the Passover with their friends. But the thought would come,—“Had it been otherwise ordered, Redemption might have been wrought, without Thy death, for all things are possible with God.”

O what a scene of sorrow is here! Look at our Lord, with love grieving for His mother; Magdalen simply prostrated with the tidings of His approaching Death. All is sighs and tears. Can you restrain weeping as you contemplate their grief?

Consider them, then, in this state; and then our Lord graciously comforting them. "Weep not," says He. "Know you not that I must accomplish the will of My Father obediently? But have no doubts, for quickly I shall return to you, and on the third day I shall rise again in safety. It is My Father's will that I should keep the Passover on Mount Zion." And Magdalen said, "As we cannot detain Thee here, we will go to Jerusalem also; but, I believe, never will be seen so bitter a Passover." The Lord, it may be, consented that they also should keep the Passover in the house at Jerusalem.

CHAPTER LXXIII

On the Lord's Supper. Of the Table and the Way of sitting at Meat. The Example of Five Virtues of Christ in the Supper. Also Five Points of our Lord's Discourse

THE time being close at hand, of the infinite mercies of our Lord Jesus, in which He had disposed to save His people, and to redeem them, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with His own most precious blood; He wills to celebrate a wonderful Supper with His disciples, before He by death should leave them, for a memorial in token of remembrance, and also that He might fulfil the mysteries which remained to be accomplished. This was a very magnificent Supper, and the things which our Lord Jesus did at it, were illustrious also. To meditate aright on these, strive with all your powers to be in spirit present at the scene: for if you make this meditation worthily and with care, the gracious Lord will not suffer you to go empty away. There are four principal points for meditation, taking the events in order. First, the actual repast; secondly, the washing of the disciples' feet; thirdly, the institution of the most holy Sacrament; and fourthly, the substance of our Lord's most beautiful discourse.

And first of the Supper itself, as a bodily repast. Consider how Peter and John were sent by the order of the Lord Jesus to a certain friend in Mount Zion, where there was a large upper room furnished and made ready for the Passover. And our Lord with His disciples on Thursday, at noontide, entered the city, and went to this place. Picture Him standing in some part of the house, and edifying His disciples by His words; and in the meanwhile, some of the seventy prepared the Passover in the upper room.

In the legend of S. Martial, some of the seventy, it is said, were present, late in the evening, ministering to the Lord Jesus. But when all were now ready in the room, the most beloved John, who was busily going in and out, making preparations and lending his help, came to the Lord Jesus: "Lord, when Thou pleasest, Thou mayest sup, for all things are ready." Look now attentively at, and linger upon all the things which are said and done; for they are most affecting, and are not to be curiously passed over, but, like the other actions of our Lord's Life, to be well pondered. For in this lies the great force of meditation, especially when the infinite love of Christ is the theme, as in the surpassing wonders which took place at this Supper.

Then the Lord Jesus arose, and His disciples with Him. And John, taking up his position at His side, could by no means henceforth be separated from Him, for no one clung to our Lord so faithfully and familiarly as John. He it was, who, when our Lord was taken, entered with Him into the hall of the high priest; nor in His Crucifixion, nor at His Death, nor after His Death, did he leave Him, until He was laid in the tomb. And in this Supper John was next to Jesus, though younger than the rest. All, then, enter the supper-room, and having washed their hands, and standing round the table, most devoutly give thanks. Look minutely at them. You must know that the table was close to the ground, and they sat on the ground, according to the ancient custom. There are traditions about this table which we need not here reproduce. All eat from one dish, as we learn from those words, "He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray me." A blessing being given by the Right Hand of our Lord, they sit or recline round the table, John sitting next the Lord Jesus Christ, and now the Paschal lamb is brought in.

But observe that you may depict this scene in two ways. In one way you may represent the disciples as sitting, as I have already said; in another, as standing with staves in their hands, eating the lamb with bitter herbs, and thus obeying the letter of the old law. Yet you must imagine them, at any rate, as sitting afterwards to eat, as may be inferred from many places in Scripture; for how else could John have leaned on the Lord's breast, unless they were sitting? The Paschal lamb was brought in roasted, and the true and spotless Lamb took it, the Lord Jesus, who was among them as one that serveth, and who cut it into portions, and gave it joyfully to His disciples, exhorting them to eat. And they eat, but not with cheerfulness, for they

knew not what new thing might happen to their Master. And whilst they were at supper, He revealed more clearly what was to follow, and said, amongst other things, "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer, but one of you shall betray Me." His saying pierced them to the very heart, like a sharp sword, and made them cease eating; and, looking at each other, they exclaimed, "Lord, is it I?" Regard them attentively, and compassionate both our Lord and them, for they are in a most sorrowful position. But the traitor, lest these words should seem to apply to him, perhaps, does not cease eating. John then, at the entreaty of S. Peter, asked and said, "Lord, who is it that shall betray Thee?" And the Lord Jesus, with singular love, opened to him the secret, but John was struck dumb and wounded to the very heart, and turned himself towards our Lord, and leaned on His breast. But our Lord did not tell S. Peter, for S. Augustine says he would, had he known it, have torn the traitor to pieces. But Peter represents the Active Life, John the Contemplative, as S. Augustine says in the same Homily on the Gospel, which was read on the Festival of S. John. You may infer from this that the contemplative man does not interrupt the actions of the inner life, and even concerning offences, does not call down Divine vengeance, but groans inwardly, and turns himself in prayer to God, and draws more closely to Him in contemplation, committing everything to His disposal. Thus, if S. John did not tell S. Peter, though it was at the instance of the latter the question was asked, you may gather that the contemplative man should not always make known the secrets of the Lord, though the contemplative may go forth, from zeal for souls and for God, into the ministries of the Active Life. Thus it is reported of S. Francis, that he did not reveal to others his secret revelations, unless zeal for his brother's salvation urged it, or a spiritual instinct given with the revelation itself dictated it.

Now, then, behold the lovingkindness of the Lord, how graciously He allows the beloved disciple to lean on His breast. O how tenderly do they love each other! Observe also the other disciples, much distressed at this saying of our Lord; not eating, but gazing at each other, not knowing what course to take. This suffices for the first point.

To the second, give diligent attention. For whilst they were in this state, the Lord Jesus rises from supper, and immediately the disciples also rise, not knowing what he was going to do. Then we may depict Him going

down into a lower room in the same house, as tradition relates; and He made them all sit down, and ordered water to be brought to Him. Then He lays aside His garments, girds Himself with a towel, and pours water into a stone basin, that He might wash their feet. Peter refuses, and, full of amazement, declines an action in his judgment so unfitting. But upon hearing the warning of Christ, he wisely changed his opinion for the better. Consider, then, well each action, and contemplate all with wonder. Highest Majesty bows Himself down, and the Master of humility stands bending down to the feet of a fisherman, and with bent knees, while they were sitting, washes with His own hands their feet, dries, and, it may be, kisses them. But that which magnifies His humility above all the rest, is, that He performed the same service for the traitor himself. But O, wicked heart, and harder than all hardness; if thou art not softened at the sight of such humility; if thou dost not reverence the Lord of Majesty; if even still thou thirstest for the death of One Who has ever shown thee kindness, ever been free from doing any harm! Woe to thee, wretched man! What thy hardened heart hath conceived, thou shalt bring forth; not, however, He, but thou shalt really perish.

Here, then, we should marvel at so great a depth of humility and kindness, etc.

Having, then, completed this service, He returned to the upper room, and reclining again, He exhorted His disciples to imitate His example. You can then, in this place, meditate how the Lord Jesus, on that evening, gave us an example of five great virtues: namely, of humility, in washing their feet; of charity, in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, and in His discourse, which is full of precepts of love; of patience, in bearing with the traitor, and the many insults He endured when captured and led away as a robber; of obedience, in undergoing His Passion and Death in submission to His Father; of prayer, by praying thrice in the Garden. Let us, then, endeavour to imitate these virtues of our Blessed Lord. We add no more on this.

But in meditating on the third point, wonder at Christ's amazing and loving condescension, and unspeakable charity, whereby He gave Himself for us, and left Himself for our spiritual nourishment. When He had washed the disciples' feet, He sat down again, willing to put an end to the institutions and sacrifices of the old law; and to ordain a New Covenant, making Himself the New Sacrifice, He took bread, and raised His eyes to

His Father, and consecrating the most Holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood, gave it to His disciples, saying, THIS IS MY BODY, which is given for you. And likewise, taking the cup, He said, THIS IS MY BLOOD, which is shed for you.

Behold this mystery, then, thoughtfully before God, and see how carefully, faithfully, and devoutly our Lord does every action, and how, with His own Hands, He communicated that His beloved and blessed family. And then, as a memorial of His love, He adds, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” This is that Memorial which, when the grateful soul receives, whether by eating or by spiritual meditation, it ought to be inflamed and inebriated with love, and through the intensity of devotion and affection transformed into the Lord Himself. For nothing could He leave for us dearer, sweeter, and more profitable than Himself. For He Who comes to us in the Sacrament, is the same Who was wonderfully conceived and born of the Virgin, Who endured death for you, and Who rose again, and ascended gloriously, and sits at the Right Hand of the Father. He it is Who created heaven, and earth, and all things, and Who rules and guides them. He it is on whom your salvation depends, in whose power and will, it is to give, or not to give, the glory of Paradise. He it is Who is offered for you and is given to you. He is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. This on our third point.

But concerning the fourth head, which is something superadded to the rest, attend to the other marks of Christ’s love. For He makes a most beautiful discourse, full of sweetness, and glowing with the fire of love. Having communicated His disciples, and that most vile Judas (according to S. Augustine, though others think he did not communicate), the Lord Jesus says to Judas, “That thou doest, do quickly.” But he, wretched man, went out, and went to the chief priests, to whom on the Wednesday before he had sold Him, for thirty pieces of silver, and sought from them a band of soldiers to take Him. But in the interim the Lord Jesus delivered to His disciples this discourse, from which, in its whole extent, admirable, useful, and venerable, I take five principal points for meditation. First, how, foretelling His departure, our Lord comforted them. For He said, “Yet a little while I am with you,” but “I will not leave you comfortless; I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice.” These things, and the like, which I briefly run through, He said to them, which went through and pierced them

to their very hearts. For they were not able to bear the thought of His departure. Secondly, meditate about this discourse, how cordially and earnestly He instructs them upon charity, saying in many places, "These things I command you, that ye love one another; by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," and similar teaching which you can find in abundance in the sacred text. Thirdly, meditate in this discourse upon the way in which our Lord carefully exhorted them to the observance of His commandments, saying, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments," and, "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love," and similar things. Fourthly, take for your meditation the way He encourages His disciples against tribulation, which He foretold would come upon them, in this manner: "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And again, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you." "The world shall rejoice," but "ye shall be sorrowful; but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Fifthly, contemplate the Lord Jesus lifting up His eyes unto Heaven, turning to His Father and saying, "Father, keep those whom Thou hast given Me; while I was with them in the world, I kept them, but now I come unto Thee; Holy Father, I pray for them; I pray not for the world; neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word. Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory;" and other similar utterances, which were truly heart-rending. It is wonderful, indeed, how the disciples, who so intensely loved their Lord, could bear these words. If, then, you meditate with attention on the sayings which are to be found in this discourse, and lay them to heart, you will rest in a sense of their sweetness, and you will burn within at so great condescension, kindness, consideration, indulgence, and love, as well as at the other actions of our Lord which were done that evening.

Behold Him, then, as He speaks, how efficaciously, how earnestly, how sweetly, He addresses them, impressing on the minds of His disciples what he says, and regaling them with the tenderness of His looks and words. Behold, too, the disciples, how mournfully they droop their heads, and weep and draw long sighs, filled to the full with sadness, as the Truth itself bears witness: "Because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart." But, amongst the rest, observe John, in close communion

with Jesus; with what attention and eagerness He regards His Beloved, and with tender anxiety gathers up His every word. For S. John alone has handed down to us a record of these things. Amongst other things, the Lord Jesus said to them, "Arise, let us go hence." O, what fear took possession of them, not knowing whither they went, or how they were to go, and fearing above all else that they would be separated from Him; nevertheless, He did not at that moment conclude, but continued His discourse, and then went on with it along the way. See, then, the disciples going after Him and with Him, each one drawing as close to Him as he could, gathering together like a flock, even as chickens round the hen; first one, and then the other pressing forward with the desire of touching Him and hearing His words, while He willingly suffered this from them.

At last, all these mysteries having been finished, He went into the Garden, across the brook Cedron, and there He awaited the arrival of the traitor, and his armed band.

CHAPTER LXXIV

Meditation on the Passion of our Lord in General

IT is now time for us to treat of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who would glory in the Passion and Cross of our Lord, ought to apply himself devoutly and tenderly to these mysteries, and their attendant circumstances; for if they are regarded with intentness of mind, they would, I think, have a transforming effect upon those who meditate upon them. For to him who searches into these mysteries with earnestness and with the whole energy of his inmost being, many unexpected lights will be vouchsafed, from which will spring up new sympathy, new love, new consolation, and consequently a new state of grace, which would seem to him a foretaste of, and partaking of glory. But to attain to this state, approach the meditation in the spirit of a child and unlettered person, so that you may make every effort to attend, keeping the eyes of your heart with watchfulness lest you wander from the subject, and banishing all other thoughts. You must direct your attention to these scenes of the Passion, as if you were actually present at the Cross; and watch the Crucifixion of our Lord with affection, diligence, love, and perseverance. I exhort you, that if you have carefully considered all that has been said concerning His life hitherto, that you redouble your attention now, and give your undivided energy to all that is to follow, for in this His love is most manifest, which ought to kindle our whole hearts. But receive all that I shall relate, with the same modification as before,—namely, that the things may have happened as I describe them. For I would not affirm anything in this little Work, which was not affirmed in or corroborated by the Holy Scriptures, or the sayings of the Saints, or received opinions.

But it seems to me quite reasonable, that not only the crucifixion of our Lord, the penalty of our sins, which caused His Death, but also all the preceding and attendant circumstances of that event, are worthy of the most intense compassion, grief, and amazement. What is it, indeed, but this, that our Lord Himself, God blessed above all things, from the hour of the night when He was taken, up to the hour of His crucifixion, the sixth hour, was in a continual conflict, great suffering, reproaches, mockings, and tortures! No intermission was granted Him. But in what a struggle and conflict He was engaged, hear and see. Contemplate the sweet, meek, and gracious Jesus. One seizes Him, another binds Him, another assaults Him, and another cries out at Him, another pushes Him, another blasphemes, another spits on Him, and another jolts Him, another grasps Him, another questions Him, some seek false witness against Him, another puts himself in collusion with them; one bears witness falsely against Him, another accuses Him, another derides Him, another blindfolds Him, another strikes His blessed face, another buffets Him, another leads Him to the pillar, another strips Him, another, while He is led, gives Him a blow, another shouts at Him, another lays hold of Him to insult Him, another binds Him to the pillar, another rushes at Him, and another lashes Him; one clothes Him with purple in mockery, and another crowns Him with thorns; one places a reed in His hand, another madly snatches it to smite with it His thorn-crowned head; another denyingly bows the knee, another derides him who does so; and many heaped reproaches on Him. He is led forward and back, is spit upon, despised, hurried about as if a fool or some most mad person, even as if a robber and wicked malefactor. Now He is taken to Annas, then to Caiaphas, then to Pilate, then to Herod, and back again to Pilate, and then He is dragged in, and then out, and then along. My God, what is this? Does it not seem to you most hard, most bitter, a continuous and violent conflict? But wait a little, and you shall see worse treatment. The rulers, the Pharisees, the elders, and thousands of people stand against Him persistently. They all shout with one accord, "Let Him be crucified." On His bruised and already wounded shoulders the cross is laid, on which He is to be crucified; on all sides citizens and strangers, not only sober and elderly, but also profane and drunken men, flock together, not to compassionate, but most shamefully to deride Him. No one recognizes Him, but all are eager to cover Him with mud and filth, and to ill-use Him; and He endures all this, He becomes their

byword. “They that sit in the gate speak against ‘Him,’ and the drunkards make songs upon ‘Him,’ ” He is driven forward, and pressed; He is dragged, and hurried along; and thus scourged, wearied, covered with wounds, and overwhelmed with reproaches, He is not allowed a moment’s rest; and scarcely can He keep His life in Him, until He reaches the place of Calvary—most unclean and loathsome spot! All is done with force and fury. But in this place, an end and rest is to be given to the struggle of which we treat; but that rest is but the beginning of a sharper struggle, namely, crucifixion and the bed of pain. Behold what a rest is this! You see how, even to the sixth hour, our Lord suffered this long and hard conflict. Indeed, “the waters came in even to His soul,” truly “many dogs came about Him”—many, terrible, strong, ferocious—and the council of the wicked laid siege against Him, “who whet their tongue like a sword and shot out their arrows, even bitter words.” We have thus summarized what may be said of our Lord’s Passion during the three first hours, even to twelve o’clock. But not indeed in this brief way must we dismiss so great bitterness and punishment for our sins which our Lord Jesus endured; reflect upon these, and re-consider all. Great, indeed, and manifold is the matter here for holy meditation, penetrating to the inmost heart and affections; be present, then, in spirit We have as yet spoken of these sufferings only in general terms. Now we will dwell upon the separate details, for we ought not to grow weary of meditating upon these pains, which our Lord wearied not in enduring.

CHAPTER LXXV

Meditation on our Lord's Passion before Matins

RESUME, then, the meditations from the commencement of the Passion, and follow the order even to the end. I shall content myself with a brief history, leaving each one to enlarge upon and draw out the points of meditation, as the Lord grants him the grace to do so.

Attend then, to every particular, as if actually present; see Him, our Dear Lord, as He goes forth from the Supper, and how, having finished His discourse, He enters the Garden with His disciples. At length, enter with Him, and ponder how affectionately, kindly, and confidingly He talks with them, and exhorts them to prayer; how also He withdraws from them a little, that is, about a stone's cast, and falling down humbly and reverently upon His knees He prays to His Father. Pause here a little while, and revolve in your mind devoutly the marvels of the Lord God.

Now the Lord Jesus prays; often before this we read that He prayed; but on those occasions He prayed as an advocate, now He prays for Himself. Pity Him, and admire His most profound lowliness. For although, as God, He is co-eternal and co-equal with the Father, He seems as it were to forget that He is God, and prays as man, and takes up the posture of one of the weakest creatures, praying to the Lord. Consider, too, His most perfect obedience; for what does He pray for? Certainly, He prays to the Father, that the hour of death may pass from Him; that is, if it be the Father's will that He might not die; and this prayer is not heard, that is according to a sort of will which was in Him. For, so to speak, there was a manifold will in Him. Here, then, exercise pity upon Him, in that the Father wills that He should die, and thus, through His True and Only Son, He spared Him not,

but in this way delivered Him up for us all. For “so God loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.” And the Lord Jesus fulfils this command, and reverentially accomplishes it. See, in the third place, the unspeakable love for us, both of the Father and of the Son, most worthy of compassion, wonder, and veneration; for us this Death is appointed; for us it is endured, through Their exceeding love. The Lord Jesus, then, prays to the Father for a long time, saying, “O My most merciful Father, I beseech Thee, hear My prayer, and hide not Thyself from My petition. Consider and hear Me, how I mourn in My prayer, and My Heart is disquieted within Me. Incline Thine ear to Me, and hearken to the voice of My prayer. It pleased Thee, O Father, to send Me into the world, that I might make satisfaction for the injury done to Thee by man; and immediately when Thou didst will, I said, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me, that I should fulfil Thy Will, O My God; I am content to do it; My talk hath been of Thy Truth and of Thy Salvation. I have been in poverty and much labour from My youth up, doing Thy will, and all that Thou hast commanded; and I am prepared to fulfil whatever remains. Yet, if it be, O My Father, take from Me this so great bitterness as is prepared for Me by My enemies; for see, O Father, the enmity of the multitude, how many they are, and how they conspire against Me, and take their counsel to take away My life. But, Holy Father, if I have done any such thing, or if there be any iniquity in My hands, if I have rewarded evil to him who dealt friendly with Me, then let Mine enemy take Me. I have always done those things which are pleasing in Thy sight; but they have rewarded Me evil for good, and hatred for My good-will. They have corrupted My disciple, and made him their guide, that they might kill Me; they have valued Me at thirty pieces of silver, at which I was prized by them. I pray Thee, O My Father, that this cup may pass from Me; but if it seem otherwise to Thee, not My will, but Thine be done. But, O Father, stand up to help Me; make speed to save Me: for granted that they knew Me not, O most Beloved Father, to be Thy Son, yet because I led among them a blameless life, and conferred upon them many benefits, they ought not to be so cruel against Me. For remember that I stood before Thee, that I might speak in their behalf, and turn away Thine indignation from them. But alas! shall evil be recompensed for good? But they have digged a pit for My soul, and prepared a most shameful death for Me. Thou seest, O Lord; be not silent; go not far from Me, for trouble is hard at hand, and

there is none to help Me. Thou hast known My reproof, My shame, and My dishonour; My adversaries are all in Thy sight; Thy rebuke hath broken My heart; I am full of heaviness.”

And the Lord Jesus returned to His disciples, awoke them, and exhorted them to pray. And again a second and third time He returned to prayer; for He prayed in three different spots, which were about a stone’s cast apart; not indeed as far as a stone may be thrown with a violent effort, but a short distance, perhaps about the length of an ordinary house, as tradition relates; and still upon those spots are said to be marks of the remains of Churches. He returned, then, to prayer, as I have said, a second, and a third time, and prayed the same words, and may have added, “Father, if it be decreed that I should undergo the suffering of the Cross, Thy Will be done. I commend to Thee My mother and My disciples; I have protected them hitherto; My Father, defend them now.” And in the meanwhile, the most sacred Blood flowed from His Body, breaking forth as sweat, in this conflict or agony, whilst He prayed more earnestly, and the drops fell copiously to the ground.

Consider Him, now, at this time, how great is the anguish of His Soul. But in this, learn a lesson whereby to check impatience; for our Lord prayed thrice before He received any answer from His Father.

But at last, while the Lord Jesus prayed in agony, behold, the Angel of the Lord, perhaps the Prince of the Angelic Hosts, Michael, stood by Him, strengthening Him. We may regard him as thus addressing our Lord: “Hail, Lord Jesus; I have offered Thy prayer, and bloody sweat, before Thy Father, in the sight of the whole company of Heaven,” and falling down before Him, the prayer is offered, ‘let this cup pass from Him.’ And the Father answered, “Jesus, My most beloved Son, knows that the Redemption of the human race, which We so desire, cannot fittingly be brought about without the shedding of His Blood, and therefore, if He wills the salvation of souls, it behoveth Him to die for them. Which would you decide, then?” Then the Lord Jesus answered the Angel, “I will most strongly the salvation of souls, which the Father created after His image; I will, therefore, to die for them, rather than not to die Myself and for them to be lost. Therefore let the Father’s will be done.” And the Angel said to Him, “Be strong, then, and very courageous, for it is fitting that the Highest should do great things, and the most Valiant should endure hard things. Quickly will the suffering pass, and eternal glory succeed to it. The Father hath said, He will be always with

Thee, and protect Thy mother and Thy disciples, and restore them to Thee safe and sound.” And the lowly Jesus, reverently and humbly receives this encouragement from His own creature, considering that He was made a little lower than the angels, whilst He was in this miserable vale of darkness. And thus He was full of sadness, and comforted as man, and as man was willing to be commended to the Father, and aided by the Heavenly Court.

The Lord Jesus rises from prayer the third time, suffused with blood; behold Him wiping His face, or perhaps washing it in the stream; regard Him, I say, and be filled with a reverent grief, and let your inmost heart be moved by the sight of His afflictions; for without the intensest inward struggle this could not have occurred.

Some wise expounders of Scripture hold that our Lord Jesus prayed to the Father, not so much from the fear of suffering as from pity for His former people; because He had compassion for the Jews, who would be lost for having thus most cruelly put Him to death. For they certainly ought not to have killed Him, Who was one of themselves, and observed their law, and wrought for them so many mercies, and prayed to the Father for their salvation, saying, “That the multitude of the Gentiles may believe, I refuse not to suffer; and if the Jews are to be blinded, that others may see, not My will, but Thine be done.” For there was then in Christ a fourfold will; namely, a will of the body, and this by no means wanted to suffer; a will of sense, and this deplored and trembled; a will of reason, and this obeyed and gave consent; for in Isaiah it is said, “He was offered up, because it was His will.” And there was in Him the Will of Divinity, which commanded and dictated the decree of the Passion. Therefore, because He was true Man, as man He was brought into deep distress. Be moved, then, to pity Him deeply; and consider and see carefully all the actions and every affection of the Lord thy God.

Then He came to His disciples, and said to them, “Sleep on now, and take your rest;” for they had fallen asleep for a little while then; but the good Shepherd keepeth watch over His little flock. O grand love! Truly did He love them unto the end, when, being in such an agony Himself, He procured rest for them. He saw afar off His enemies coming with torches and weapons, yet He did not disturb His disciples, till they were quite near at

hand; then He said to them, “It is enough; behold he is at hand that doth betray Me.”

And while He yet spake, the wicked Judas came before them—that basest trafficker—and kissed Him. It is said to have been the habit of Jesus, when He had sent out His disciples, to receive them with a kiss when they returned; and therefore it was that the traitor for a sign, through giving a kiss, betrayed Jesus, and, coming before the rest with a kiss, returned to Jesus, as though he said, “I am not one of this armed band, but return as usual, and kiss Thee, saying, ‘Hail, Master!’ ”

Behold, then, attentively the scene, and observe every movement of your Lord, and see how patiently and kindly He receives the embrace and kiss of the wretched traitor, whose feet He had so recently washed, and to whom He had given Heavenly Food. How does He suffer Himself to be taken, bound, smitten, madly hurried away, as if He were a malefactor, and wholly unable to defend Himself! How, too, does He compassionate His disciples, as they flee and are scattered! You can also contemplate their grief; how, sorrowfully sighing and groaning, as orphans overpowered by fear, they depart from Him; and how their distress is heightened when they see their Lord so cruelly dragged along; when they see these dogs hurrying Him off as the victim, and Him, as a most meek lamb, following them without resistance. Now look at Him, how He is dragged on by these most wretched men, from the brook up to Jerusalem, in haste and tumult, His Hands bound behind His Back, stripped of His garment, His remaining clothes in disorder, His Head uncovered, bent to the ground with weariness, and goaded on with excessive speed. And now they present Him before the chief priests Annas and Caiaphas, and the other elders who are gathered together with them; and they exult like a lion when he has taken his prey; they examine Him, they procure false witnesses, they condemn Him, they spit on His most sacred Face, blindfold Him, buffet Him, smite Him with the palms of their hands, saying, “Prophecy who is it that smote Thee?” They afflict Him with manifold insults, and He bears all with perfect patience. Behold Him in any one particular suffering, and pity Him.

At length the elders departed, and we can conceive that they put Jesus into a sort of dungeon, traces of which are said to remain, and bound Him to a pillar of stone, and committed Him to the guard of armed men for greater safety, who occupied themselves throughout the night in deriding and

cursing Him. Hear those daring and coarse revilers, saying, “Do you think you are better and wiser than our chiefs? What folly this is of yours! How can you dare to open your mouth against them? Their wisdom is evident, and now where is yours? They will doubtless condemn you to death, and you will undergo the sentence.” And thus through the whole night, then one, then another, in deeds or words insult Him. No words can tell what passed that night, or what our Lord endured from the hands of those vile mercenaries. Behold Him, silently and humbly bearing all these insults, as though He deserved them, with downcast face, and compassionate Him deeply. O Lord, into whose hands hast Thou now come? What patience Thou manifestedst! Truly this is the hour of darkness.

And there our Lord remained till morning. Meanwhile we can imagine S. John going to the Blessed Virgin, and to the company of holy women, who were assembled in the house of Magdalen, where they perhaps had had the Supper; and relating all that had happened to our Lord and to His disciples. Then an indescribable scene of sorrow took place. Behold them, and excite pity for them; they are in terrible affliction, and deepest sorrow for their Beloved Lord, because now they fully realize and believe that He is going to die. Picture His mother, turning to the wall; imagine her praying. “O Father, most Adorable, most Gracious, most Merciful, I commend to Thee my most beloved Son. Thou canst not be cruel, for Thou, Eternal Father, art good to all. Wherefore should my Son Jesus die, for He hath never done amiss? Yet, O Just Father, if Thou wilt the redemption of the world, may it not be, I pray Thee, brought about in another way, for all things are possible to Thee? I pray Thee, Most Holy Father, if it be Thy will, may my Blessed Son Jesus be spared from dying, may He be delivered out of the hands of sinners, and restored to me. He, from obedience and reverence for Thee, will not exercise His power to rescue Himself. He has surrendered Himself, as one powerless and without knowledge, into their hands. Wherefore do Thou, O Lord, help Him.” Such prayers, we might venture to imagine, the Blessed Virgin, with a true mother’s love, would pour forth at this time, with all earnestness of supplication, and with intense bitterness of heart. Excite compassion as you see her now in such affliction.

CHAPTER LXXVI

Meditation on the Passion of Christ for the First Hour

EARLY in the morning, the chief men and rulers of the people returned, and caused the Hands of Christ to be bound behind His Back, saying, “Come, Thou robber, with us; come to judgment; to-day shall Thy evil deeds be put an end to, now shall Thy wisdom be known.” And they led Him to Pilate; and He, as though a culprit, followed them, though He was the most innocent Lamb. But when His mother, John, and the holy women (for they had gone forth very early in the morning, that they might come to Him) met Him in the cross-road, and saw Him dragged away by so great a multitude, amidst so many reproaches and insults, they were filled with an indescribable sorrow; and this most bitter grief was mutual. For the Lord was deeply moved by the affliction of His friends, and especially of His mother. For He knew that He was the cause of their grief, and that their souls were nearly sundered from their bodies through it. Contemplate, then, our Lord, and diligently consider every particular, for all is momentous and moving.

Christ, then, is led to Pilate; and these women follow afar off, for they are not able to be near. He is accused of many things, and then Pilate sent him to Herod. But Herod rejoiced at this, desirous of seeing a miracle wrought by Him; but He not only failed to obtain this, he did not get even a word from Him; and therefore he judged Him to be a fool, and having clothed Him in a white robe in derision, he sent Him back to Pilate. See how, not only as a malefactor, but as a fool, he was regarded by them all; but all this He bore with consummate patience. Behold Him, then, as He is led forward and backward, with downcast look, and lowly garb, hearing the shouts,

reproaches, and mockeries of the populace; receiving now and then, perhaps, a blow from a stone, or some offensive and filthy missile. Regard, too, His mother and disciples, standing afar off in a state of unspeakable sorrow; and thence following Him. Then He is brought back to Pilate, those “dogs” following up their charges against Him with great zeal and persistency; but Pilate, not finding any cause of death against Him, endeavoured to release Him. Thus he said, “I will chastise Him and let Him go.” O Pilate, you chastise your Lord? Do you not know what you are doing? for He has done nothing worthy of death or of stripes; you would be acting rightly if, at His bidding, you chastised yourself. But, however, Pilate commanded that He should be most cruelly scourged.

Then the Lord was stripped of His clothes, and bound to a pillar, and in various ways scourged. He then, so comely and abashed, “fairer than the children of men,” stands bare before them all; His flesh, most innocent and tender, most pure and lovely, receives the hard and cruel stripes from those most base men. The Flower of all flesh, the Flower of all humanity, is covered with blows and bruises. His Royal Blood flows forth on all sides, from His whole Body; wound upon wound, and lash upon lash, is added, until not only the scourgers but also the spectators were weary, and then He is ordered to be unbound. Tradition says the pillar had lasting marks of blood upon it.

Here, then, behold Him with a long and steady gaze, and if you feel no sorrow for Him, know that yours is a stony heart. Now was fulfilled what Isaiah the Prophet wrote: “When we saw Him, there was no form or comeliness that we should desire Him; we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” O Lord Jesus, who was it who was so daring, so rash, as to venture to strip Thee? who those, still more daring, who bound Thee? who those, most daring of all, who with such extreme cruelty scourged Thee? But Thou, Sun of Righteousness, didst withhold Thy rays; therefore all was darkness, and the power of darkness. All seem more powerful than Thou. Thy love and our sin have thus made Thee appear powerless. Accursed be our so great iniquity, for Thou hast all this to bear.

Then the Lord, having been loosened from the pillar, they lead Him, thus bare and bleeding, through the house, to find His poor garments, which were scattered hither and thither by his executioners. Regard Him, then, attentively, thus suffering, thus shuddering with pain and exposure. For the

Gospel says it was cold. But when He would have put on His garments, perhaps some most impious men snatch at them, saying to Pilate, “Oh, sir, He made Himself a King; let us dress Him as one, and crown Him with royal honour.” Then they took a sort of robe of purple, and clothed Him with it, and they crowned Him with thorns. Behold Him, then, in every action, every suffering, for He does and suffers all they will. He wears the purple robe, He bears upon His Head the crown of thorns, He takes the reed into His Hand, while they bow the knee before Him, and salute Him as a king—He all the while holding His peace, and maintaining a most patient silence. Behold Him now in the bitterness of His heart, and most of all contemplate His Head crowned with thorns, and continually being struck with the reed. See how He receives the blows, with neck bowed down through extreme pain. For the thorns were very sharp, and pierced His most Sacred Head, which was consequently covered with blood. O wretches! How one day will that Royal Head appear awful to your sight, which you now are striking! For they mocked Him as one who had the will to reign, but not the power. But He bore all, for their cruelty was excessive; indeed, they seemed unable to satisfy their desire to put Him to pain, and thus they gathered together the whole band of soldiers. And they bring Him forth before the people and before Pilate himself, thus put to scorn, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Behold Him, then, for the sake of God, how He stands with face turned toward the ground, while the whole multitude shout and cry, “Crucify Him,” mocking Him and scoffing at Him, as though they were wiser than He. See, too, how He deigns to appear without wisdom before the chief men and Pharisees, who seem now to have Him in their grasp, and are leading Him to a dreadful end. And thus not only pain and vengeance, but also reproaches, He suffered from them.

CHAPTER LXXVII

Meditation on the Passion of Christ at the Third Hour

THEN the whole multitude of the Jews require that He might be crucified, and thus He was condemned by that miserable judge, Pilate. His benefits, His mighty works, are all forgotten; His innocence does not move them; and what appears most cruel is, that after all that He has already suffered, they draw not back at the sight of His afflictions; nay, the chief men and elders are full of joy, that they can at last carry out their wicked design. They laugh, they mock Him, Who is the Very and Eternal God; they hasten on His death. They lead Him within, they despoil Him of the purple robe: He stands bare before them, hindered from re-clothing Himself. Attend here diligently, and consider His posture in every particular. And feel tenderly for Him; and that you may nourish the affection of compassion the more, avert your eyes a little while from His Divinity, and regard Him as simply man. You have before you a young man, most noble, comely, innocent, and loving, His whole body, bruised, discoloured, waled by the lash of the scourge, covered with blood, collecting His poor garments which are thrown hither and thither, clothing Himself with them, with bashfulness, recollection, and shame, at the presence of His persecutors who revile Him, as though He were the lowest of them, forsaken of God, and destitute of all human help. Look at Him with a fixed gaze, and you will be touched with tenderness and compassion. Now He collects one garment, now another, as He clothes Himself anew with them. Now return to the thought of His Divinity; consider the Infinite, Eternal, Incomprehensible, and Royal Majesty, made Flesh, bending lowly to the ground, and collecting His garments and clothing Himself with modesty and reverence, as though the

meanest of men, yea, a slave with no rights, and simply in their power, corrected and chastised by them for some offence. Behold Him, then, attentively, and be filled with amazement at His lowliness, and compassionate Him in a similar manner, when you see Him bound to the pillar and scourged beyond all limit. When re-clothed, they lead Him forth, not to defer His death any longer; they lay upon His shoulders the venerable wood of the Cross, long, thick, and weighty, which the most meek Lamb patiently received and carried. Tradition says the cross was fifteen feet high. He is dragged, hurried along, overwhelmed with revilings, as before we saw Him at the First Hour. He was led along with His companions, the two thieves.

Behold, this is His society! O good Jesus! What shame do these companions cause Thee; they associate Thee with robbers. They even treat Thee worse than they treat them; for they lay on Thee the heavy cross, which they are not said to do to them. Thus not only, as Isaiah says, "He was numbered with the transgressors," but He was counted worse than they. Indescribable, O Lord, is Thy patience!

Contemplate, then, our Lord carefully, how with bent form He carries His cross, and how fearfully exhausted He is through want of breath. Feel all possible pity for Him, in such distress, at every renewal of insult. And because His mother, full of sorrow, on account of the crowd could not get near Him, nor get to see Him, she, with John and her friends, may, we can imagine, have taken a shorter road, that, being before the rest at the point where He would pass, she might be able to approach Him. But when beyond the gate of the city, where the roads meet, she perhaps came in His path, and saw Him bearing the heavy cross, she was half dead with sorrow, and became speechless; nor yet could the Lord address her, for He was hurried along by those who led Him to be crucified. But, proceeding a little further, Christ turned to the weeping women, and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves," etc., as in the Gospel is fully related. Where these events are said to have occurred, there are remains of Churches, which some state as a matter of memory. Mount Calvary, where Christ was crucified, is distant from the gate of the city, about as far as our place is from the gate of S. Germanus; so that the cross had to be borne a long way. When, then, He had gone a little further, He became so fatigued and cramped with carrying the cross, that He laid it

down. Then, those most vile men, disliking to defer His death, fearing, too, lest Pilate should revoke the sentence—for He had displayed vacillation—compelled a certain one to bear His cross; but Him, thus unburdened, they led as a robber bound to the place of Calvary. Do not, then, these sufferings, which He endured, at the matin, at the first and the third hours, seem to you, apart from the Crucifixion, to have been most violent and bitter afflictions, fearful and dreadful indeed? Yes, I think so, and fitted to call out our compassion for Him, and to excite intense grief. Thus, we seem to have completed what we have to say for the present concerning the sufferings of our Lord at these three points of time. Let us now turn to those events which happened at the sixth and ninth hours, His Crucifixion and Death. Then we will afterwards consider what took place after His Death, at evening time, and at the close of the day.

CHAPTER LXXVIII

Meditation on the Passion of Christ at the Sixth Hour

WHEN the Lord Jesus, conducted by these wicked men, arrived at that foul place, Calvary, you may depict to yourself the scene of activity which those sinful men displayed on all sides. Gather yourselves up by a great effort of mind, that you may be present at and realize everything which is done against your Lord, and all that is said or done by Him, or at His instance. Behold, then, with your mind's eye some fixing the Cross into the ground, others preparing the nails and hammers, others getting the ladder with other implements ready for use; some, indeed, taking the direction of what was being done, others meanwhile stripping our Lord of His raiment. For He was stripped and made bare now for the third time before the multitude, and His Wounds were reopened because His garments had stuck to His Flesh. What a sight was this for His mother, when her Son was thus prepared to undergo death—sad, indeed, beyond measure. We can imagine that she would long to draw near and embrace Him or cover Him. O what bitterness of soul! No help can be given, no; for they are dragging her Son with fury to the foot of the Cross.

Now diligently behold the process of Crucifixion. Two ladders are accustomed to be placed, one on the one side, the other on the other; upon these, wicked men go up, with nails and hammers; while another ladder is placed in front, reaching to that part of the Cross where the feet are to be nailed. Contemplate now each event. Our Lord may have been compelled by means of this small ladder to ascend the Cross, for He does whatsoever they bid Him, humbly, without resistance or complaint. Having reached the top of the ladder, He turns Himself round, it may be, opens His arms, and

extends His Hands—so royal and beautiful—and yields Himself up to His crucifiers.

He looks up to Heaven, and addresses His Father: “Lo, here I am, My Father; Thou willedst that I should humble Myself, even to the death of the Cross, for the love and salvation of the human race. I accept it, and for them I offer Myself to Thee, whom Thou hast given Me, and whom Thou hast willed should be My brethren. Accept, then, O Father, My offering; be it propitious in Thy Sight from love for Me; blot out all their old stains of sin, and set them free from them. Father, I offer Myself for them to Thee.”

Then he who was behind the Cross, took His Right Hand, and nailed it firmly to the Cross; which being done, the other on the other side took His Left Hand, stretched It as far as possible, puts another nail to It, sticks and fastens It to the Cross. After this, they descend from the ladders, and remove them. The Lord hangs down by the weight of His Body, supported only by the nails through His Hands. Nevertheless, another comes up, and draws down His Body by His Feet with all his might, and holds them, whilst another drives a nail most cruelly through them.

Some think that another method was employed in crucifying our Lord: that they laid the Cross on the ground, and there nailed Him to it, and then raised it, and fixed it in the ground. If you are drawn to conceive of the crucifixion after this manner, behold how they rush upon Him contemptuously, as though a most vile person; and, mad with passion, cast Him down upon the Cross upon the ground, laying hold of His Arms, and cruelly stretching them in opposite directions, and so fastened them with all vengeance to it. In like manner, behold what they did with His Feet, which they dragged down most violently.

Behold, the Lord Jesus is crucified, and so stretched upon the Cross, that “all His bones might be told,” as He complains by His Prophet. On all sides streams of the most Sacred Blood flow from those large wounds. So bound is He that He is unable to move any member save His Head. Those three nails bear the whole weight of His Body. He suffers most bitter pain, beyond all description or thought. He hangs between two thieves; on all sides, tortures, revilings, reproaches; for, in all His anguish, they did not refrain from reproaches. Some blaspheme, saying, “Ah, Thou that destroyest the Temple.” Others, indeed, cried out, “Himself He cannot save,” and similar expressions of derision. “If He be the Son of God, let

Him come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him.” And the soldiers, also, who crucified Him, divided His garments in His presence.

And all this, haply, is said and done in the presence of His most sorrowful mother, whose sympathy with Him much augmented His sorrow. She would wish, indeed, in her sympathy, to hang with Him on the Cross, and would rather die with Him than live any longer. Anguish is on all sides; such misery as might be felt, but cannot be told. His mother stood by the Cross in the midst, and turned not her eyes from her Son; she was afflicted with Him, and prayed doubtless to the Father most fervently: “O Father and God Eternal, it is Thy will that my Son should be crucified. I cannot now desire it to be otherwise, but you see the bitter anguish of His soul; wherefore I pray You, ease His sufferings, if it be Thy will.” And the Son, we may believe, similarly prayed for her: “Father, behold My afflicted mother. I ought thus to suffer, but not she; yet in her sympathy she is united with me in the Cross. It is enough that I should be crucified, because I bear the sins of all the people, but her sufferings can have no like merit. Behold her desolate, and worn out with all this grief. I commend her to Thee; make her sorrow more bearable.”

There were near the Cross, with the Blessed Virgin, John and Magdalen, and the two sisters of Mary; namely, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, and perhaps others also; all of whom, and especially that beloved disciple of Jesus, Magdalen, wept bitterly: nor could they be comforted for their beloved Lord and Master; they suffered with Him, with His mother, and with each other. Again and again was their sorrow renewed, for their compassion was unceasingly called forth, when some new reproach or suffering was added to the Passion of their Lord.

CHAPTER LXXIX

Meditation on the Passion of our Lord at the Ninth Hour

BUT our Lord, whilst hanging upon the Cross, even to the departure of His spirit, was not idle, but did and spake that which was for our instruction. Whence He spake seven words, which are to be found recorded in the Gospel.

The first word was uttered, in the very act of crucifixion, when He prayed for His crucifiers, saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Which word affords us a striking instance of patience and of love, yes, of unspeakable charity.

The second word was to His mother, when He said, “Woman, behold Thy son!” and to John, “Behold thy mother!” He did not call her mother, lest, through the extreme tenderness of her love, the name itself should make her grieve the more.

The third word was addressed to the penitent thief, when He said, “To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.”

The fourth word was, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”—that is, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” As if He said, “Thou, Father, didst so love the world, that, while Thou hast delivered Me up for it, Thou seemest to have forsaken Me.”

The fifth word was when He said, “I thirst” Which word excited great pity on the part of His mother and her companions, and John; and called forth great joy on the part of wicked and cruel men. For though the word might be explained of a spiritual thirst for the salvation of souls; yet, in truth, He endured bodily thirst from loss of blood, whereby He was dried within and quite parched. And when those wretched men were at a loss to

know by what means they might do Him some new injury, they invented from this saying a fresh mode of tormenting Him. Wherefore they gave Him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. Accursed be their wrath, for it was insatiable; for they afflicted Him in every way in which they could.

The sixth word was, “It is finished;” as if to say, “Father, the law of obedience, which Thou gavest Me, I have perfectly fulfilled. Still, whatever now Thou wouldst order Me, Thy Son, order Me, and I am ready to accomplish whatever may remain. For I am prepared for stripes. But all that was written of Me is finished; if it please Thee, O Father, recall Me to Thyself.” Then we can imagine the Father to reply, “Come, My most beloved Son. Thou hast done all things well; I will not that Thou be afflicted any further. Come; for I will receive Thee in My Bosom, and will embrace Thee.” And from that moment He began to droop, as dying people do, now closing, now opening His Eyes; and He inclined His Head, now this way, now that, all strength failing Him.

At last He adds the seventh word, with a loud cry and tears, saying to His Father, “Father, into Thy Hands I commend My spirit;” and saying this, He gave up the ghost, and with His Head bowed upon His Breast, as if giving thanks to the Father for that He called Him back to Himself, He committed His spirit into His Hands. At this cry, the centurion was converted, who was near, and said, “Truly this was the Son of God,” when He heard Him cry at the very moment of death. For other men at the time of death are unable to cry out, and therefore He believed in Him. Great, indeed, was that cry, heard even in Hell. Oh, what then were the feelings of His mother, when she saw Him thus painfully fail, sink, weep, and die! I judge that she must have been as one in a trance and unconscious, from the multitude of her troubles, or have become half dead; much more so now, than when she saw Him bearing His Cross. What now did faithful Magdalen, that beloved disciple? What did John, beloved above all? What did the two sisters of Mary? What, indeed, could they do, steeped in grief, overwhelmed with sorrow, stupefied as with bitterest gall? They all wept, without any remedy for their grief.

Behold, then, the Lord hangs dead upon the Cross; the multitude leaves the heights of Calvary; the mournful mother remains with those four, and sits at the foot of the Cross. They contemplate the Beloved One; they wait for help from the Lord, to know how to get Him restored to them, and to

bury Him. And you, if you have with fixed attention gazed upon your Lord, can tell how, from the sole of the Foot, even to His Head, there is no soundness in Him; there is no member, no sense, which has not endured some great pain or injury. Here, then, you have, indeed, enough on the Crucifixion and Death of our Lord, which happened at the sixth and ninth hours; sufficient, indeed, for our little knowledge and experience. But strive devoutly, faithfully, and carefully to give yourself to meditate upon this. For concerning the events which followed upon His Death we will now speak.

CHAPTER LXXX

Of the Opening of the Side of Christ

WHILST the Blessed Virgin and John, Magdalen and the sisters of Mary, remained and sat on one side near the Cross, and gazed unceasingly on the Lord Jesus, hanging thus upon the Cross between the thieves, so bare, so afflicted, dead, and forsaken by all; behold, many armed soldiers came from the city towards them, who had been sent to break the legs of those who were crucified, and thus to kill, and then to bury them, so that their bodies may not remain upon the crosses on the great day of the Sabbath. Then Mary and all rise and look at them, wondering what is going to take place; and thus their grief is renewed, and their fear and trembling increased. Much, indeed, did His mother fear what was going to be done to her dead Son. We can depict her, turning to Him and saying, “O most Beloved Son, what more do they want to do to Thee? have not they killed Thee? I know not what more they can do. Oh, that I might be able to protect Thee now, dead, though I could not, when living. O Heavenly Father, be merciful and shield us. And all weeping came, and took up their position in front of the Cross. Then the soldiers came up with fury and violence, and seeing that the thieves were still alive, break their legs and killed them, and taking down their bodies from the crosses, perhaps pitched them into some ditch. And then they came to our Lord Jesus. His mother, being moved with deep affliction, resorted to her usual arms of defence, deep humility; she fell, it may be, on her knees, beseeching the soldiers, with tears streaming down her cheeks, in the name of the Most High, not to do any injury to her son. “I am a mother in deep distress, and I have never committed any offence or injury, for which I should suffer this. And if my Son has seemed to you to have done amiss, you have already put Him to death; therefore now be merciful. Do not touch His Body now, that it may remain intact for burial.

He is dead already. There is no need to break his legs.” John, Magdalen, the sisters, all wept most bitterly. “Oh, what shall we do? Cast yourself before these most wretched men, and implore them; see if you cannot influence and bend them by piety and lowliness!” But humility is an abomination to the proud;—you labour in vain.

Then one, said to be named Longinus, at that time impious and proud, but afterwards a penitent, a martyr, and a saint, stretching forth his spear at a distance, notwithstanding the cries and entreaties of the holy women, plunged it into the right Side of our Lord Jesus, making a great gash, from which flowed water and blood. The mother of Jesus was stupefied with grief at this sight, and remained upheld by the arms of Magdalen. John, perhaps, was stirred by his sorrow to inveigh against this act. “Infamous men, know you not that He is dead already? wish you to pierce His mother’s heart and to kill her with grief? Be-gone, that we may bury Him.” Then, as God willed, they departed.

Then the Blessed Mother arose out of her grief, to inquire what further they had done. Death seemed to touch her, as often as any new indignity was offered to her Son. Then, indeed, were Simeon’s words fulfilled: “A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also.” For surely the same lance pierced the Body of the Son, and the soul of the mother. And all again placed themselves at the foot of the Cross, not knowing what to do. For they could not take down the Body and bury It, not having sufficient strength nor instruments to do so. They dare not depart and leave Him hanging there, neither could they remain there when night drew on. You see in what great perplexity they were. O God, how dost Thou permit Thine elect to be so afflicted, especially her, the chosen one of all, a mirror of virtues and consolation! But it is time to pause, and take breath a little.

CHAPTER LXXXI

Meditation for the Evening Hour

AGAIN, they descry in the distance the forms of other persons who are approaching them; these were Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus, bringing with them others, bearing tools, by which they might take down the Body from the Cross; and carrying with them a hundred pounds' weight of myrrh and aloes, for they were coming to bury our Lord. Then they all rise up once more in great terror. O God, what affliction do they endure this day! But John, looking round, recognized Joseph and Nicodemus. Then the Blessed Virgin, recovering strength, says, "Blessed be our God, Who sends us help; He has been mindful of us, and has not deserted us. Run, my son, to meet them." Then John ran to meet them, and upon reaching them, they embrace each other with great weeping, being unable for an hour to hold any converse, from their deep compassion, and excess of grief and weeping: afterwards they come in front of the Cross. Joseph makes inquiries about the companions of the Blessed Virgin, and of what has become of the other disciples. And he replies, that he does not know where the disciples are, and that they had not been there that day. He further asked what had been done to our Lord, and John described all that had taken place. But when they came to the foot of the Cross, they bent the knee and worshipped our Lord. Then approaching the Blessed Mother and her companions, they were reverently received with appropriate gestures, bending to the ground, and continuing together in silence for a long while. At length, perhaps, the Virgin spake, saying, "You do well in remembering your Master, Who loved you so greatly; and I confess that your arrival has given me new light, for we knew not what to do. May the Lord reward you!" Then they answered, "We grieve with our whole heart for all that has been done against Him. For the wicked have overwhelmed the Just One; gladly would

we have delivered Him out of their hands, had we been able. This little service, at least, we will render to our Lord and Master.” Whereupon they arose, and made ready to take down the Body of Jesus.

But do you, as I have so often enjoined, with diligence and fixity of gaze, watch the mode of taking down the Body of Christ Two ladders, we may assume, are placed on the opposite sides of the Cross. Joseph ascends one of the ladders and tries to draw out the nail from Christ’s Hand. But this it is difficult to do, because the nail is thick and long, and deeply imbedded in the wood, and without greatly bruising the hand of our Lord it does not seem able to be done. But he would employ no rude force, for he acted reverently, and thus our Lord graciously accepted his service. As soon as one was drawn out, John, it may be, made signs to Joseph that he should pass to him the nail, anxious to save the Blessed Virgin Mother the pain of seeing it. Then Nicodemus extracted the other nail, and gave it in the same way to John. Then Nicodemus came down and came to the nail in His Feet: Joseph meanwhile upholding the Body of our Lord. Happy, indeed, he who is thus privileged! Then, perchance, the Virgin reverently took the Right Hand as it hung down, and pressed it to her mouth, contemplating it and kissing it with strong crying and dolorous sighs. The nail in the Feet having been drawn out, Joseph descended a little, and all receive the Body of the Lord, and lay It on the ground. His mother receives His Sacred Head and rests It on her bosom, and Magdalen His feet—those Feet, at which she once found such grace! Others stand around; all make great mourning over Him, for their mourning is most bitter, as that of one who mourneth for his only son.

CHAPTER LXXXII

Meditation for the Last Hour

AFTER some delay, when night drew on, Joseph asks the Blessed Virgin to allow the Sacred Body to be wrapped in linen clothes and buried. Perhaps she withstood this request, saying, “Oh, my friends, do not wish to take the Body of my Son so quickly out of my sight, or let me be buried with Him.” But she wept inconsolably; beholding the Wounds in His Hands and Side, seeing, too, the marks of the thorns, His dead Face, His torn beard, His Face besmeared with spittle and with blood as she looked at His features, now this way, now that; nor could she cease to gaze, nor cease to weep. As to the plucking of the beard, Scripture itself bears testimony to the truth of it, for Isaiah says, “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.” His mother saw all this, and wished to have time to dwell on all. But, it was getting late, and so John said, “Lady, let us accede to the request of Joseph and Nicodemus, and permit them to prepare the Body of our Lord for burial; by too long delay It may receive some fresh insult from the Jews.” At this saying, we can imagine, the Virgin, full of gratitude and prudence, remembering that she had been committed to the care of John by her Son, withdrawing her refusal; and, with words of blessing, permitting His sacred Body to be wrapped in the linen, as it was the custom of the Jews so to bury. Then His mother held His Head and composed It for burial, as Magdalen did His Feet. For Magdalen may have asked that this part of the preparation for burial might be given to her, saying, “Grant me, I pray you, that I may arrange the Feet, for at these it was that I found mercy.” Her request was vouchsafed her, and she reverently held His Feet. Her sorrow at that moment seemed to cause her strength to fail her, and those Feet, once by her bedewed with tears of compunction, were now again bathed with a flood of tears of sorrow and

compassion. As she gazed upon those Feet, wounded, bruised, shrivelled, blood-stained, she wept most bitterly. For, as the truth itself testifies, “she loved much;” therefore she wept much, and especially at those mournful obsequies of her Lord and Master, afflicted, scourged, wounded, dead, and reduced, as it were, to nothing. She could scarcely contain herself for sorrow; her heart was breaking. She knew of no remedy, and this office she was helping to perform was one unfamiliar to her. It was a new and a last duty she had now to perform, and in performing it her soul was bitterly afflicted, because she could not do it so precisely nor recollectedly as she desired. She would have washed, and anointed, and carefully arranged His sacred Form, but neither time nor place permitted her to carry out these desires. She could not do more; she could not do differently: she did what she could. At least, she was able to wash His Feet, to embrace and kiss them, to wrap them up, and arrange them carefully, according to the best of her knowledge and ability. All having been done, they turn to the Virgin Mother, as if to see what more should be done, and give vent to their sorrow. Then, seeing there could be no more delay, the mother haply kissed her dearest Son’s face, and said, “O my Son, I hold Thee dead, to my breast; bitter indeed, bitter is this parting; pleasant and lovely was life in fellowship with Thee, without offence or harm to others; and yet, O sweetest Son, Thou hast been slain as if an evil-doer. Faithfully, O my Son, have I served Thee, and Thou me; but in Thy bitter struggle, it was not Thy Father’s Will to help Thee, and I had no power. Thou hast given up Thyself for love of the human race, whom Thou wouldst redeem. Hard, indeed, and painful was that work of Redemption, in which I rejoice, for it accomplished man’s salvation. However, in Thy Sorrows and Death I am sharply afflicted; for I know that Thou never sinnedst; and that without a cause, as far as Thyself is concerned, Thou didst endure a most painful and shameful death. Now, then, my Son, our companionship is broken; and from Thee I must be separated. I, Thy most mournful mother, will bury Thee, but afterwards whither shall I go? Where shall I stay, my Son? How can I live without Thee? Would I not willingly be buried with Thee, that wherever you are I might be? But though not in body, yet in mind, let me be buried with Thee; let my soul be buried in the tomb with Thy Body: to Thee I commit it, to Thee resign it. O my Son, how bitter is this separation!” We can picture her tears falling upon His Face, even more copiously than those of Magdalen

upon His Feet. Then she washed His Face, and wrapped His Head in the napkin, and carefully fastened it. Then, again, a second time were words of blessing uttered. And all knelt down in adoration; and kissing His Feet, lifted his Body and bore It to the sepulchre—the mother at His Head, Magdalen at His Feet, the rest bearing the Body between them. The sepulchre was near the place of crucifixion, but a short distance off, where they reverently laid Him, with bended knees, with great lamentation, loud sobbings, and bitter cries. His mother, with words full of blessing, again embraced Him, and stooped over Him, and fain would have remained by the Body of her dear Son. But they removed her, and placed a great stone at the door of the sepulchre. Bede says, the tomb was round and excavated, formed out of the rock, of some height, so that a man could just reach the top with his hand, and that it had an entrance from the east: but that the side where the Lord's Body was placed was towards the north, cut out of the same rock, and seven feet in length.

CHAPTER LXXXIII

Meditation at Night

BUT Joseph, wishing to return to the city, after he had finished this last duty, says to the Blessed Virgin, “O lady, I beseech you for God’s sake, and for the love of your Son and my Master, if it please you, to withdraw to my house, for I know that you have not one of your own; use mine as your own, for all is at your disposal; and Nicodemus said the same. O what compassion! The most exalted of all creatures has not where to lay her head, and must pass those days of bitterness and widowhood under another’s roof. Truly those were days of widowhood, because Jesus was all to her—her Lord, Son, Spouse, Father and Mother, all in one, and in losing Him she lost all. Truly was she then a widow and forsaken, not having whither to turn. Then she bowed humbly, giving thanks to them, and replied that she was committed to the care of John. And when they still continued to question her, John answered, that he wished to take her to Mount Zion, to the house in which his Master supped the evening before, with His disciples, and there to abide with her. Then they, bowing and worshipping at the Sepulchre, retired; and the rest, as the Gospel states, remained sitting over against the Sepulchre. But as night drew on, John said to the Blessed Virgin, “It is not fitting that we should continue here too long, or return into the city at night; and therefore, if you please, let us go away.” Then the mother, rising and bending the knee, embraces the Sepulchre, uttering words of blessing: “My Son, since I can no longer stay with Thee, I commend Thee to Thy Father.” Then with eyes raised to heaven, and with tears and intense affection, she says, “O Eternal Father, I commend to Thy care my Son, and with Him I commend my soul, which I resign to Thee.” Then they began to depart. But when they came to the Cross, she there knelt and said, “Here my Son departed, here He poured forth His most precious

Blood.” And the others did likewise. For we may well believe that His mother was the first to make an act of devotion at the Cross. They then went into the city, though again and again she turned to look behind her. And when they came to a point, after which the Sepulchre and Cross were beyond their sight, she turned and knelt devoutly, as also did the rest. And when they came upon the entrance to the city, the sisters of Mary veiled her as a widow, covering, so to speak, her whole face, and preceded her, whilst she followed between John and Magdalen, in a most mournful condition. Then perhaps Magdalen, wishing, upon entering into the city, to take the way which led to her house, and to lead them there, made arrangements accordingly, and said, “O lady, I pray you, for love of my Master, to come to my house, for that is the best course; for you know how He liked to come to it. It is your own—all I have is yours; I beseech you, come.” Then they again began to weep. But the Virgin Mother kept silence, and made signs to John, and Magdalen continued her entreaties. But he said, “It is more fitting that we should go to Mount Zion, chiefly because there we shall be better able to meet with our friends. Do you go with us thither.” Magdalen replied, “You know well that I will accompany her wherever she goes, and never leave her.” On entering the city, a number of virgins and good matrons come to meet her, as soon as they know that she has arrived, and join themselves to her to comfort her, but great was their lamentation. Also some good men compassionated her, as they passed amongst them, and were moved to tears, saying, “This was, indeed, a great injustice, which was done to-day by our rulers against the Son of this lady; and God for Him has wrought great miracles; let them be careful what they are doing.”

But when they arrived at the house, then the Virgin Mother, turning herself towards those good women who had gone with her, bade them adieu, thanking them for their sympathy, and bowing to them most courteously. And they in turn inclined themselves and reverently departed, making great lamentation. Then Mary went into the house, and Magdalen and her two sisters. But John stood at the door, and desired the rest to retire to their own homes, for the hour was late; and, thanking them, he shut the door. Then the Blessed Virgin, looking round the house, exclaimed, “O my sweetest Son, where art Thou; I can see Thee no longer here? O John, where is my Son? O Magdalen, where is thy Father, who so tenderly loved thee? O beloved sisters, where is my Son? Our joy, our sweetness, the light

of our eyes; He has gone from us, with what anguish you know well. This it is which intensifies our grief, when I think of Him covered with wounds, filled with bitterness, parched with thirst, goaded, oppressed, afflicted, unable to be helped; all forsook Him, even the Almighty Father did not will to support Him. And how quickly, too, all these sufferings followed one upon another, you yourselves saw. What vile criminal was ever condemned with such haste, and violent cruelty? O my Son, at night wast Thou taken, and treacherously betrayed; at the third hour wast Thou condemned, and at the sixth crucified, and thus Thou didst die! O Son, how bitter is this parting from Thee, and the memory of Thy most shameful death!” At last, John asked her to desist, and consoled her. Do you, as far as possible, be present at this scene, and unite in spirit with John in those ministries of consolation and reflection which followed, that you may receive a heavenly blessing, and then retire.

CHAPTER LXXXIV

Meditation on the Blessed Virgin and her Companions

ON the morning of the Sabbath they remained within, with closed doors—the Blessed Virgin, her companions, and John, in deep affliction, as orphaned children, hardly speaking a word, but sitting together and absorbed in the thought of what had passed. Now and then they raised their faces for a moment and glanced at each other, as people do when suffering from some great and overwhelming calamity. A knock, we may imagine, is heard at the door, and they are thereby filled with fear and apprehension, and all security seemed gone. However, John went to the door, and on opening it discovered Peter; and turning to those who were within, said, “It is Peter.” The Blessed Virgin said at once, “Admit him.” Whereupon Peter entered, suffused with shame, weeping and sobbing greatly; and this renewed the grief of all, who wept in silence. Then the other disciples, one after another, came to the house, weeping. At length, subduing their grief, they began to speak of their Lord. Then Peter says, “I am ashamed of myself; I ought not to speak in your presence, nor to appear before men, because I forsook and denied my Lord, Who loved me so greatly.” The rest also smote their breasts, and wept, charging themselves with leaving their sweetest Lord. Then the Virgin Mother says, “The Good Master and Faithful Shepherd has left us, and we remain as orphans; but I firmly trust that we shall soon have Him again; you know how gracious He is, and how dearly He loves you all. Doubt not that He will be gracious and forgive every offence or fault freely. But so great was their fury—permitted by the Eternal Father—against Him, and to such a pitch did they carry their malice and daring, that you could not have helped Him, whatever you had done.

Therefore do not be disturbed.” “Indeed, lady,” replied Peter, “it is as you say. For I, who saw the beginnings of things, was so overcome with terror in the hall of Caiaphas, that I hardly thought I should have been able to escape their vengeance, and so I denied Him. I did not remember the words of warning, by which He foretold me of this, till His Face was turned upon me.” Then Magdalen asked about the warnings, and he told all about them, and his denial of his Master, adding other circumstances which he related to her, and what had passed at the Paschal Supper. Then says the Blessed Virgin, “I wish to hear of those things which were said and done at this Supper by Him.” Then Peter makes signs to John, that he would tell her. And John begins and narrates the whole; and thus they all conversed together about what our Lord had done. First one, and then another, has something to say, and thus the day passed. O how attentively did Magdalen listen! And Mary was more attentive still. How often, during the relation of His words and actions, did she exclaim, “Blessed be my Son, Jesus!”

Regard them, then, diligently, and compassionate them, for their affliction is great—yes, as great as can be conceived. For what is it to see the most blessed of all creatures in heaven and earth, and the princes of Churches and of all peoples, the leaders of the whole divine army, thus shut up in a little room, and timorous, not knowing what to do, save only to comfort one another, conversing together on the actions and sayings of their dearest Lord. Yet the Blessed Virgin maintained a calm and peaceful mind, for she had most sure hope of the Resurrection of her Son; in her alone faith held its ground on that Sabbath, and this is commemorated on Saturdays. Nevertheless, she could not feel joyful at the death of her sweetest Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

But in the evening, after the sun was set, when work was permitted, Mary Magdalen and the other Mary went to buy spices, with which to make ointments. Late, too, the evening before, when they returned from the sepulchre of our Lord, they began preparations, and continued them till sunset; afterwards they ceased. For the Sabbath had to be observed from sunset on Friday till sunset on the following day. Now, then, they are going forth to buy the spices. Behold them attentively, as they go with mournful countenances, like widows, and apply at the shop for the spices, kept, it may be, by some devoted person who takes pity on them, and grants them at once all they require. They want spices, and the best they can get; and

having paid for them they return, and begin to make ready the ointments for their Lord. Regard them diligently, how humbly, how devoutly, and faithfully they labour for their Lord, with much weeping and deep sighing. But the Blessed Virgin and the Apostles look on, and perhaps offer them help. And thus the day ended, and they go to rest. This, then, is the meditation for Holy Saturday, upon the Virgin Mother, her companions, and the disciples.

CHAPTER LXXXV

Meditation on the Lord Jesus, on Holy Saturday, descending into Hell

NOW we must consider what the Lord did on the day of the Sabbath. Immediately upon His Death He descended into Hell, to the Holy Fathers, and remained with them. Were they not then in glory—for the sight of the Lord is perfect glory? Consider, then, here, and observe what kindness, what charity, what lowliness, Christ showed in going down into Hell. For He might have sent one of His angels to them, and freed all His servants, and then vouchsafed His Presence when He pleased. But His infinite love and humility would not have been satisfied with this course; therefore He went down Himself, and visited them, not as servants, but as friends, though He was Lord of all, and abode with them even till Sunday dawned. Think, then, of these things; admire, and strive to imitate the virtues which are manifested. The Holy Fathers rejoiced, indeed, at His Advent, and were filled with immense sweetness; all disquietude was at once expelled; and they continued to sing canticles of praise and joy before Him, upon which you may meditate in this manner. Imagine them, as if clothed with bodies such as shall be theirs after the Resurrection, and likewise that most benign Soul of our Lord Jesus Christ. For as soon as they felt His saving Advent, they met Him joyously, exhorting one another, and saying, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people,” and the rest. “Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh,” “Arise, arise, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck.” “Behold, thy Saviour cometh, to loose us from our chains.” “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in,” We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee, our most loving

God. And falling down, they worshipped Him, with joy and great gladness. But consider them, for with reverence and great exultation, and joyful countenances, they stand before Him, and give utterance to such praises as we have named. And in similar praises, canticles, and songs, they continued in those borders till nearly daybreak on Sunday. A multitude of angels, we can conceive, would join them in their jubilations. Then the Lord led them forth from hell with triumph, going before them gloriously, and placed them in a Paradise of delights. After which, He remained with them a brief space, it may be in sweet converse with Elias and Enoch, who recognized Him, and then He said, "It is time that I raise My Body; I will go and resume it." Whereupon all fell on their faces, and said, "Go, O Lord, King of Glory, and return quickly, if Thou wilt; for we long to see Thy most glorious Body."

You have, then, matter for meditation, on the Lord Jesus, His mother and disciples, and the Holy Fathers, for the Saturday in Holy Week. Now, as I have run through the entire history of the Passion, without adding quotations, for fear that by doing so I might have called off the mind's attention from the great theme; I now propose to add a few authorities, by which to stir up our spirit to a more fervent and devout meditation. Hear, then, according to our wont, what S. Bernard says. "You owe," says he, "all your life to Jesus Christ, because He laid down His life for you, and endured such bitter torments, lest you should have to suffer eternally. For if all the days of the sons of Adam, and all ages, or all the labours of men who ever have been or shall be, were gathered into one, yet would such bear no comparison in moral worth to that Body, which is beautiful and wonderful, even in the sight of heavenly intelligences, in its conception by the Holy Ghost, in its Birth of a Virgin, in its innocence of life, in the affluence of its teaching, in the coruscation of its miracles, in the revelation of Sacraments. For as heaven is higher than earth, so is His Life above ours. In fact, there is no possibility of instituting any comparison between terms which are so distant, for no life is more worthy than His, none more miserable than ours. When, then, I dedicate to Him all that is in my power, it bears in comparison with His self-sacrifice, the proportion of a star to the sun, of a drop to a river, of a stone to a mountain, of a grain to a bushel." And again, "The 'emptying' of Christ of His glory was not a solitary act, or one of limited character; on the contrary, He humbled Himself to the flesh, to

death, to the Cross. Who can ever form an adequate estimate of His lowliness, His meekness, His condescension—a God of Majesty, to be clothed with flesh, to be punished by death, to endure the shame of the Cross? But, shall we say, the Creator was not able to mend His work, without resorting to such extreme measures? He was able, but He preferred to suffer Himself, lest there should be any longer occasion or excuse for man's ingratitude, a vice most odious and base. Truly, He embraced much fatigue, so that, through His great love, He might make man a debtor; and that the very difficulty of His Redemptive Work might move man to gratitude, whose creation through its facility had failed to call it forth. For what did man, created and unthankful, in effect say? 'I have been made, it is true, but my creation cost my Maker nothing, no toil, no labour. He only spake the word, and I was made, and all else besides me.' ” And further on, “ ‘But the mouth of those that speak evil shall be stopped.’ It is clearer than the day now, O man, what thou hast cost thy God. From the Lord to become a servant, from the rich poor, from the Word the flesh, from the Son of God the Son of man, He disdained not. Remember, if at no cost He made, He did not at no cost redeem thee. In six days He made all things, and thee among them. But for the whole of thirty years, He laboured for thy salvation in this earth. O how did He labour, bearing the necessities of the flesh, and the temptations of the enemy! He could not intensify any further the shame which He endured on the Cross; He could not heighten the honour of His Death.” And again, “That which makes Thee lovable to me, O good Jesus, is the cup which Thou didst drink in order to accomplish my salvation. Here is that which exacts a return of love from me. This, I say, it is, which woos our love and kindles our devotion, and even commands it out of justice, and binds us to it and greatly moves us. Much, indeed, did the Saviour labour to redeem us, but in creating the whole world, the Creator suffered no fatigue. He spake and they were made; He commanded and they were created. But in redeeming, He bore contradiction as to His words; treachery, in actions; derision, in sufferings; reproach, in death.” “In the exceeding greatness of His love, Christ gave up His Soul to death, and from His own Side, He paid the price of Satisfaction, to reconcile man to the Father. In which there is an allusion to the words of the Psalmist, ‘With the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption.’ Yes, indeed, ‘plenteous,’ for it was not a drop, but streams of blood which issued from the five Sacred Wounds of

Christ's Body. What could He have done for us that He did not do! He gave sight to the blind, He set the prisoner free, He brought back the wanderer, He reconciled the guilty. Who would not run after Him, willingly and gladly—Him who frees from error, effaces faults, who in life obtains merits, and in death acquires a recompense? What excuse can he have, who does not run in the odour of His ointments, unless he has lost his sense of smell? But the odour of His life fills all the earth. For 'the earth is full of the mercy of the Lord,' and 'His mercies are over all His works.' He, then, who does not perceive this vital fragrance, which is spread everywhere, must be either dead or in a state of decay." Again, "The Spouse is not ashamed to be black, because she knows that this colour was once that of the Bridegroom, and it is a glory for her to resemble Him. Nothing is more glorious than to bear the reproach of Christ. Hence that word of exultation and salvation, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.' The ignominy of the Cross is grateful to him who is not offended at the Crucified. This blackness, then, is but the form of and resemblance to the Lord. Go to the sacred pages of Isaiah, and he will tell you what he saw in spirit. What else does he speak of, but 'of the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, who had no beauty that we should desire Him'? And he adds, 'We did not esteem Him—as if a leper, as one smitten of God and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, and by His stripes we are healed.' " And again, "In the end, He made Himself 'sin;' do I fear to say 'black'? Behold Him, in mean attire, livid with blows, covered with spittle, pallid with death." Again, "Could He have been more deformed, or have appeared blacker to the spectators, than He was when His two Hands were stretched on the Cross, in the midst of two thieves, a sight to call forth derision from the wicked, but tears from the faithful, when He alone was mocked, Who should have caused terror, and ought to have received homage?" And elsewhere, "The rock is a refuge for the wild goats; and are not the wounds of Jesus a firm and safe hiding-place for the weak? So much the more secure I dwell, as He is the more powerful to save; the world may roar, the body press down, the devil lie in wait—I fall not. For I am founded on a strong rock. I have committed a great sin, my conscience is disturbed, but not overwhelmed, for I will remember the wounds of my Lord. He, forsooth, was wounded for our iniquities. Who, then, so near to death, that He may not be saved by the Death of Christ?"

And below, “The nail cries, the wound cries, that truly God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. The iron passed through His Soul, it was plunged into His Heart, that He might henceforth be able to compassionate our infirmities. The secret recesses of His Heart were laid bare through the wounds of His Flesh, that great mystery of love was laid bare, that mercy of our God whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us. How were those inner yearnings of the Heart of God disclosed, if not by these wounds? In what, more clearly could the love of God have been manifested than in Thy Wounds; for Thou, O Lord, art good, and gracious, and full of lovingkindness? For no one hath greater mercy than this, that he should lay down his life for those who are condemned and given over to death.”

And, in another place, S. Bernard says, “Meditate on the Passion of the crucified Body, and see if there is any member in it which does not plead for thee to the Father. For thee, that Divine Head was encircled with the prickly tresses of thorns, which were driven into the tender covering of the brain, and so fixed. ‘My people,’ says the Lord by His Prophet, ‘have surrounded Me with the thorns of their sins.’ It is, therefore, that your head may not ache, or your intentions be wounded, that His Eyes were dim with death, and for a while were darkened, whose brightness illuminates the world. Was it not when they were darkened that darkness covered all the earth, and, with those two great luminaries, other lights were withdrawn? But all this was done, that your eyes might be turned away, lest they behold vanity; or, if they did, might shun it. Those Ears which hear in Heaven, ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts,’ hear on earth,’ ‘Thou hast a devil;’ ‘Crucify Him, crucify Him.’ And why this? But that your ears might not be deaf to the cry of the poor, nor be open to words of vanity, or drink in the venom of slander. That beautiful Face, fairer than the sons of men, was besmeared with spittle, injured by blows, regarded with derision. For thus it is written, ‘Then did they spit in His Face, and buffeted Him, ... saying, Prophecy unto us, who is he that smote Thee?’ Why was this? But that thy face might be enlightened, and, being enlightened, may be confirmed, and ‘be no more sad.’ That Mouth, which teaches angels and instructed men, which spake and it was done, was now tormented with vinegar and gall; but this came to pass, that thy lips might speak the words of truth and justice, and confess the Lord thy God. Those Hands, which laid the foundations of

the Heavens, are stretched upon the Cross, and transfixed with the sharpest nails, that thine hands may be stretched out towards the poor, that you may be able to say with the Psalmist, 'My soul is alway in my hand.' What we have ever in our hand we do not easily forget; so he who applies his soul to good works, will not easily forget it. That Breast, in which are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, was wounded by the soldier's spear, so that thy breast might be purified from all evil imaginings; and having been purified, might be sanctified, and having been sanctified, might be kept holy. Those Feet, whose footstool we ought to adore, because it is holy, were pierced by the cruel nails and fixed, that thy feet might not hasten towards evil, but run in the way of Thy commandments. What shall I say more? 'They pierced My hands and My feet; I may tell all My bones.' For thee He laid down His flesh and life, to gain for Himself thy body and spirit. He gave all for all." Again, "Awake now, O my soul, and shake off your dust, and contemplate this wonderful Man, whom, in 'the mirror of the Gospel' you may behold as present. Consider, my soul, who is this, who advances with the mien of a king, and nevertheless is covered with confusion as though the vilest slave. He walks crowned, but His crown brings Him torture. At a thousand points His Blessed Head is wounded. He is arrayed in royal purple, yet this contributes rather to contempt than to honour. He bears a sceptre in His Hand; but with it they strike His venerable Head. They worship before Him, bending their knees to the ground, and proclaim Him king; but immediately they spit upon His lovely cheeks, strike Him on the mouth, and dishonour His noble neck.

"Behold, my soul, how that Man by all is pressed and insulted. He is ordered to carry the weight of His Cross, to bear His ignominy to the place of execution. They give Him myrrh and gall to drink. On the Cross He is raised, and He cries, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Who is this, who does not give vent to one word of complaint, of threatening, or malediction against those accursed 'dogs,' amidst all His sufferings, but His last word was one of blessing on those unjust men, such as had never been before heard? Whom hast thou ever seen, my soul, so meek, so loving? But draw closer to Him, who is worthy to be regarded with the greatest admiration and compassion. Behold Him, stript of His raiment, torn with stripes, bound ignominiously to the Cross by the iron nails, in the midst of two thieves, given gall and vinegar to drink, pierced,

when dead, in the side by the spear, with rivers of blood flowing forth from His five wounds, His Hands, His Feet, His Side. O, my eyes, begin to weep, my soul to melt with compassion at the wounding of this most lovely of the sons of men, whom you behold amid such meekness, oppressed by so many sufferings.” Again, “Look down, O Lord, Holy Father, from Thy sanctuary, from Thy dwelling on high in the heavens, and behold this sacred offering, which our great High Priest offers to Thee, Thy Holy Child, the Lord Jesus, for the sins of His brethren, and pardon the multitude of our offences. Behold the Blood of our Brother, Jesus, cries unto Thee from the Cross—Behold, I am crowned with glory and honour. At the Right Hand of Thy Majesty He stands for us before Thy Face; for He is our Flesh and our brother.” Again, “Look, O Lord, upon the Face of Thine Anointed, who is obedient to Thee, even unto death; let not those wounds depart from Thine eyes for ever, that You may remember what a satisfaction He has paid for our sins. Would that our sins, whereby we have deserved Thy wrath, were placed in one scale of the balance, and all that Thine Innocent Son endured for us in the other. Certainly that Passion would be the greater, and thus the more worthy of exciting Thy mercy towards us, than our sins of calling forth Thy wrath. O that every tongue might thank Thee, O Lord and Father, for the abundance of Thy goodness, who spared not Thine only begotten Son, but delivered Him up to death for us, to the end that we might have so faithful an Advocate in the heavens before Thee.” Again, “And to Thee, O Lord Jesus, most brave Champion, what thanksgiving can I render which shall be worthy of Thee—I, a man, dust and ashes, and vile clay? For what for my salvation wouldst Thou have done, more than Thou hast done? From the sole of Thy foot, even to the top of Thy head, Thou hast been plunged in an abyss of suffering, that Thou mayest extricate me from all suffering. And the waters entered even into Thy Soul. For Thou didst give Thy Soul over unto death, that Thou mightest restore mine, already dead. Lo, Thou hast bound me to Thyself by a twofold debt, by what Thou hast given me originally, and by that which Thou, by suffering, hast restored to me. I am debtor to Thee, for my life, twice given to me: once, at Creation, again in Redemption. What, then, can be more fully Thy due than my life? But for Thy precious Life, Thy Soul so troubled, what can I repay Thee! For if I could offer Thee heaven and earth, and all their garnishment, it would all fall infinitely short of what Thou hast given me. Thy gift must precede all

return on my part, for I am myself Thy gift: it is, therefore, only through Thy gracious condescension that I can offer Thee any return whatever. I ought to love Thee with all my heart, all my mind, all my soul, all my strength; and to follow Thy footsteps, who didst deign to die for me; but how can I do this, except through Thee? My soul shall cleave unto Thee, for all my strength depends on Thee?" Thus also S. Bernard. And you have, indeed, in S. Bernard, mellifluous and most lovely outpourings on the Passion of our Lord. See that you imbibe them. And, with the aid of these passages, go over with all your heart's devotion the account of our Lord's Passion, because meditation thereon surpasses all other, for the Passion is the most efficacious part of His Life. Now, let us turn to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

CHAPTER LXXXVI

Of the Lord's Resurrection. How He first appeared on Sunday, it may be, to His Mother

THE Lord Jesus, very early in the morning, came with a glorious multitude of angels to the tomb on the Lord's day, and re-assumed His most holy Body; and having risen again, went forth by His own power, the tomb being still closed. But at the same hour—very early in the morning—Mary Magdalene and the mother of James, and Salome, began to go to the sepulchre with the ointments, taking leave of the Blessed Mother.

But the Blessed Mother remained at home, and prayed; we may imagine her words: "O most merciful Father, O most loving Father, as Thou knowest, my Son has died; He has been fastened to the Cross between two robbers. I have buried Him with my own hands; but Thou art powerful, O Lord, and canst restore Him to me safe and sound. I beseech Thy Majesty to restore Him. Why delays He so long to come to me? Send Him back to me, I pray Thee, for my soul cannot rest until I see Him. O my sweetest Son! what has come to Thee? What art Thou doing? Why art Thou delaying? I pray Thee, do not put off any longer to come to me; for Thou saidst, 'On the third day, I will rise again.' Is it not now the third day, my Son; for not yesterday, but the day before, was that great and bitter day, a day of affliction and death, of darkness and blackness, of parting and of dying. This, then, my Son, is the third day. Awake up, my Glory, my Only Good, and return. Above all things, I desire to see Thee. Let Thy return console me as Thy departure deeply grieved me. Return, then, my Beloved; come, Lord Jesus; come, my only Hope; come to me, my Son." Whilst she thus

prayed and gently wept, represent to your mind the Lord Jesus suddenly appearing, with garments of the whitest hue, with calm countenance, beautiful, glorious, radiant with joy, and accosting His holy parent. And she, recognizing her Son, fell upon her knees, adoring Him. And then her Son replied, "I am Jesus, Thy Son; I have risen from the dead." Then rising, and weeping for joy, she embraced Him, and pressing her face upon His, she clung to Him, whilst He lovingly held her. And as they remained a while together, the Blessed Mother closely regarded Him, looking over Him to find any traces of His sufferings; she saw His Face the same as before, but she marked the wounds in His Hands. Whereupon He may have replied to her inquiring look, "All sorrow has now left me; I have overcome death and grief, all pain and anguish, nor shall I ever feel any more." Then the Blessed Virgin would give thanks: "Blessed be Thy Father, Who hath restored Thee; exalted and praised be His Name, and be it magnified for ever." They then remain and rejoice together; with love and joy the first Easter is thus kept. And the Lord Jesus recounted, how He had delivered His people from Hell, and all things which He had done those three days. O what a great Easter was this!

CHAPTER LXXXVII

How Magdalen and the Other Two Maries came to the Sepulchre, and of the Running of Peter and John

BUT Magdalen and the other two Maries went, as I have said, to the sepulchre, with the ointments. When, then, they had gone beyond the gate of the city, they recalled to memory the trials and sufferings of their Master, and at all the places where anything of importance had happened they stopped, we may imagine, a little, kneeling down and kissing the ground, and giving vent to groans and sighs, saying, “Here we met Him with the Cross on His shoulder, when His mother almost died with trouble. Here He turned Himself to the women. Here He laid down His Cross through weariness; on that stone He rested a while. Here so cruelly and harshly they goaded Him on, and made Him go quickly, almost run. Here they stripped Him of His raiment. Here they crucified Him!” And then, with great crying and floods of tears, they cast themselves down upon their faces, and salute the Cross; still red with the Precious Blood. Then rising, and going towards the Sepulchre, they said, “Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?” And on looking up, they saw the stone rolled away, and the Angel of the Lord sitting upon it, who said to them, “Fear not,” etc., as in the Gospel is recorded. But they, disappointed of their hope—for they thought to find the Lord’s Body—not attending to the words of the Angel, returned terrified to the disciples, saying that the Lord’s Body had been taken away. Then Peter and John ran to the sepulchre.

Observe carefully all that happened. These Apostles run; Magdalen and her companions run after them; all run to seek their Lord, who was their

heart and their soul; they run with much trust, much fervour, much anxiety. But when they had come to the tomb and looked into it, they found not the Body, but they saw the linen clothes and napkin, and departed. Compassionate them, for they are in great affliction. They seek their Lord, and find Him not; and they know not where further to look for Him; therefore, sorrowing and weeping, they went away.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII

How the Lord appeared to the Three Maries

BUT the Maries remained in the same place, and looking into the sepulchre, they saw two angels, standing in white garments, who said to them, “Whom seek ye; the Living among the dead?” But they neither heeded their words, nor accepted any consolation from the angelic vision, for they sought not angels, but the Lord of angels. Two of the Maries were again frightened, and as it were absorbed with grief, and drew themselves back a little, and sat sorrowing. But Magdalen, not knowing what else could be done, and because she could not live without her Master, when she could not find Him there, and knew not where to look for Him, stood at the sepulchre without, weeping. Again she looked into the sepulchre, because she was constantly hoping that she should see Him there where she had buried Him, and she saw the same angels sitting there, who said to her, “Woman, why weepest Thou? Whom seekest Thou?” And she replied, “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.” See the wonderful action of love. A little while before she had heard from one angel that He had risen, and afterwards from the two that He was alive, and yet she seemed to forget their words, and answer, “I know not.” Love effected this, because, as Origen says, “her soul was not where she herself was, but where her Master was. She knew only to think, to speak, to hear, of Him.” But while she thus wept, she cared not for angels; but from love of her, her Master was unable any longer to keep away. Perhaps Jesus informs His mother of His desire to comfort Magdalen, in which she rejoices. “Go, my Son, and console her; she hath loved us tenderly, and was in bitter grief at your death.” And Jesus, full of love for her, departed. He comes to the sepulchre in the garden, where Magdalen was, and says to her, “Woman, whom seekest thou? Why weepest Thou?” And she, not yet recognizing Him, as

one who did not know what she was doing, answers Him, “Sir, if Thou have borne Him hence, tell me where Thou hast laid Him; and I will take Him away.” Regard her attentively; how, with tearful countenance, and in a suppliant and devout manner, she prays Him to tell her where He is whom she seeks. For she was continually hoping to get some tidings of her Beloved. Then the Lord said to her, “Mary;” and she, coming to herself and recognizing Him by His voice, said with inexpressible joy, “Rabbi,” that is, Master, “Thou art the Lord whom I sought; why hast Thou so long concealed Thyself from me?” And running to His Feet, she longed to embrace them. But the Lord, desirous of raising her mind to heavenly things, that she might not henceforth seek Him on earth, said, “Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren, and say unto them, that I ascend unto My Father, and your Father,” etc. And He added, “Did not I tell you beforehand, that on the third day I should rise again; why, then, did you seek me in the Sepulchre?” And she replied, “O Master, I tell you that such grief had possessed my heart for the bitterness of Thy Death and Passion, that, mindful of nought else, I remembered nothing but Thy dead Body, and the place where It was laid; and therefore this morning I brought the ointment. Blessed be Thy Majesty, who had deigned to rise again and come back to us!” Then they rejoiced together with great gladness of heart. But she closely regarded Him, and asked Him many questions, to which He replied with readiness. Is not this a great Easter?

But notwithstanding our Lord’s check, I can hardly believe but that she lovingly touched Him before she left Him, and kissed His Feet and Hands. But the Lord at first gave her that warning, for the instruction of others also, because He revealed Himself to her as He had been in her affections, or because He willed to raise her thoughts to heavenly things, as S. Bernard seems to suggest. For it will surely be piously believed, that as He so lovingly and singularly revealed Himself to her, before all others, according to the record of Holy Scripture, He did this, not to confound her, but to fill her with joy. For a mysterious purpose, then, and not harshly, did He say that word; because the most gracious Lord is neither inexorable nor severe, and least of all to those who love Him. After, then, a little delay, the Lord departed from her, saying that He must visit others also.

Then Magdalen, altogether changed, resigned herself to the thought of His departure, saying, “I see, O Lord, that Thou wilt not again be with us,

as Thou hast formerly been; I beseech Thee, do not forget me; remember all the blessings, O Lord, which Thou hast bestowed upon me; remember Thy friendship and Thy love for me; remember me, O Lord my God.” And the Lord replied to her, “Fear not; be strong and steadfast, for I shall be always with you.” Then Christ gives her His blessing and departs; and she joins her companions, and relates all that had passed; and they, filled with joy at the Resurrection, but grieving that they had not themselves seen Him, depart with her. Whilst the three Maries thus walked together, before they reached the city, the Lord Jesus appeared to them, saying, “All hail.” And they, rejoicing beyond all description, fell down before Him, and embraced His Feet. Then they likewise look inquiringly, and gaze upon Him, and rejoice in His gracious response to them, and they too keep a great Easter. But the Lord Jesus says to them, “Tell my brethren that they go into Galilee; and there shall they see Me,” as I foretold them. You see that the Master of humility calls His disciples brethren; has He, then, ceased to exercise this virtue? But you, for your part, if you would gain the knowledge and consolation which this scene should impart to you, do what I have before taught you: be present in spirit at every spot, as though you were there bodily. And in this manner strive to realize all that follows.

CHAPTER LXXXIX

Our Lord is said to have appeared to Joseph, as well as to James the Less, and Peter

THEN the Lord Jesus, departing from them, is said to have appeared to Joseph, who had buried Him, visiting him in prison, where the Jews had confined him, intending to put him to death after the Sabbath. The Lord appeared to him, to comfort him and wipe the tears of sorrow from his face, and gave him, according to tradition, liberty. Then the Lord Jesus manifested Himself to James the Less, who, it is said, had vowed that he would not eat until he had seen Him risen, according to S. Jerome. And the Lord said to him and to those who were with him, "Set on meat;" and having blessed the food, He gave it to him, saying, "Eat, beloved brother, for the Son of man is risen from the dead."

But when Magdalen and her companions return to the house, and tell His disciples that the Lord has risen, Peter, grieving that he had not seen his Lord, nor able to rest for the vehemence of his love, departed from them, and went alone towards the Sepulchre; for He knew not where else to go in quest of Him. Whilst He was on the road, the Lord Jesus appeared to him, saying, "Peace be to thee, Simon." Then Peter, smiting his breast, and falling to the ground, cried out with tears, "O Lord, I acknowledge my fault, that I forsook Thee, and many times denied Thee;" and he kissed His Feet. Then our Lord raised him from the ground, and embraced him, saying, "Peace be unto thee; fear not, all thy sins are forgiven thee; I knew well what would happen, and forewarned thee. Now, therefore, go and strengthen thy brethren, and be strong, for I have conquered death, and all your enemies and adversaries." Then he kept his great Easter. And they remain and hold converse together, and Peter diligently regarded Him, and

marked every particular. The Lord then gave him His benediction, and he returned to the other disciples, and related all that had happened. Now, you must know that the appearance of our Lord to the Blessed Virgin is not recorded in Holy Scripture. I mentioned it at first, because the Church seems to hold it, and it appears at length in the legend on the Resurrection.

CHAPTER XC

Of the Return of our Lord to the Holy Fathers after the Resurrection

THE Lord Jesus, when He had left Peter, having not yet visited the Holy Fathers, whom He had translated into the Paradise of delights, returned to them, clothed in a white robe, and accompanied by a multitude of angels. And when they saw Him coming to them in so great glory, they received Him with indescribable joy and exultation, with songs and canticles of praise, saying, “Behold our King; come, let us run to meet our Saviour; great is the beginning of His kingdom, and it shall know no end; a holy Day hath dawned upon us, come all and adore the Lord.” And falling to the ground, they worshipped Him; then, rising and standing by Him, they reverently and sweetly concluded their praises, saying, “ ‘The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed.’ My flesh, O Lord, shall rest in hope, Thou shalt fill me with joy from Thy Countenance; at Thy Right Hand there is pleasure for evermore. Thou art risen, O our glory; we will be glad and rejoice in Thee. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth from generation to generation. And we do not depart from Thee; Thou wilt raise us up, and we shall exalt Thy Name. The Forerunner is for us entered, ‘made an High Priest for ever.’ ‘This is the Day which the Lord hath made, we will be glad and rejoice in it.’ This day the Day of Redemption hath dawned on us, of Reparation for the long past, of eternal joy in the future. On this day, the very heavens drop honey throughout the world, for ‘the Lord hath reigned from the Tree.’ The Lord hath reigned, and hath put on glorious apparel; the Lord hath put on His apparel, and girded Himself with strength. ‘Sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done marvellous things; with His own right hand and with His holy arm

hath He gotten Himself the victory.’ But we His people, and the sheep of His pasture, come let us adore Him.”

When the evening drew on, the Lord Jesus said to them, “I have compassion on My brethren, for they are grieved and dismayed at My death, and are scattered as sheep without a shepherd, and they desire much to see Me. I will go, then, and show Myself to them: I will strengthen and console them, and will soon return again to you.” Then falling down before Him, they said, “Be it, O Lord, as Thou hast said.”

CHAPTER XCI

How the Lord appeared to Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus

WHEN two of the disciples were going towards a village called Emmaus, despairing and sad, as they conversed upon all that had happened, the Lord Jesus drew near, and as a stranger joined Himself to them, and journeyed with them, entering into conversation, asking them questions and replying to their inquiries, and giving them wholesome instructions, as is recorded in the Gospel. At length, constrained by them, He went in with them and manifested Himself to them. Give heed to all that happened, and consider the goodness and kindness of our Lord. First, in that His ardent love was unable to endure that they should thus wander and be sad. Truly as a faithful friend, a constant companion, the benign Lord joins Himself to them, seeks the cause of their sadness, and expounds to them the Scriptures, inflaming their hearts and cleansing them from all the rust of their corrupt nature.

And this He fain would do daily with us. When we are weighed down with trouble or overcome with weariness, if we speak of Him, He will comfort and illuminate our hearts, and inflame them with His love; for the best remedy for such disorders is to turn at once to God. Wherefore the Prophet says, “O how sweet are Thy words unto my throat; yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth.” And again, “Thy word is tried to the uttermost, and Thy servant loveth it.” And thus, of meditating upon God, the same Prophet says, “My heart was hot within me; and while I was thus musing, the fire kindled.”

Secondly, consider the goodness of our Lord, not only expressed in love, but in deep humility. Behold Him, with what lowliness He walks with them;

He, the Lord of all, walks with them, as if only one of them. Do you not see He still adheres to the principles of lowliness? He has left us an example, that we may imitate Him. He did not disdain those disciples who were of a lower degree, but joins them, and enters into familiar converse with them. The world would act very differently; they would choose out the chief and the rich, and would only make companions of such. In another way, too, His humility is manifest. For the proud do not like to expend grand sayings amongst a few; but our Lord with two reveals His sacred things: He despises not a few, no, not even one, for He once talked with the woman of Samaria.

Thirdly, consider the goodness of our Lord, how on this occasion He instructed His disciples in moral truth, how He refreshes and comforts them. You may depict Him to yourself how He made as though He would go further, that He might draw out their desire, and that they might invite and detain Him in their company; and how, afterwards, He graciously entered in with them, took bread, blessed it with His most holy Hands, brake it, and gave it to them, and revealed Himself to them. Daily would He do the same spiritually with us, for He wills to be held and invited by means of our desires, prayers, and holy meditations. And therefore we ought always to pray, and not to faint, as He Himself hath taught us. All this was done for our instruction, that we should apply ourselves to works of kindness and hospitality, and learn how Divine lessons have not only to be heard and read, but to be fulfilled in act. Concerning this, you will find ample matter in the homily of Gregory upon the Gospel. Christ, however, only remained for a brief interval with those disciples, but immediately, when He had given them bread, vanished out of their sight. For He willed to console others, by the same means by which He had comforted them.

CHAPTER XCII

How the Lord appeared to the Disciples, whilst shut up on the Day of the Resurrection

BUT the two disciples returned immediately to Jerusalem, and found the other disciples, except Thomas, assembled together, and told them what had happened; whilst they in turn heard that the Lord had risen indeed, and had appeared to Simon. Then the Lord Jesus, coming in to them, the doors being shut, stood in the midst and said unto them, "Peace be unto you." And the disciples fell to the ground, and charged themselves with the fault of having forsaken Him; and they received Him gladly and eagerly. Then the Lord says, "Rise, my brethren, for all your sins are forgiven you." Then He stood and talked with them familiarly, and showed them His Hands and Side, and opened their understanding, that they may understand the Scriptures and know His Resurrection. He seeks from them, whether they have anything to eat; and He eats before them a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb. He breathes upon them, and says to them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." See you, how they are filled with sweetness and joy. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. They rejoice before Him, who at first were terrified. O how readily did they give Him what He asked; how eagerly they served Him; how delighted were they to be near Him! How would our Lord's mother rejoice at this, and they with her; how would she be delighted, if she could be near her Son, and minister to Him; and He, too, we may imagine, would delight in such attendance. And then, Magdalen too, for we must not forget her, a beloved disciple, a sort of Apostle of Apostles. You may depict her, sitting again at Jesus' Feet, and listening gladly to His words, her heart full of joy and willingness to serve Him. O what a holy company, and how delightful to dwell therein! If you

have any devotion, does this not seem to you a great Easter? Yes, indeed, it is. But the Lord remained but a little time with them, for it was somewhat late. Haply they pressed Him to stay a little longer with them, beseeching Him not to depart so quickly. Magdalen fain would hold His robe, and with reverent boldness detain Him a little longer; holding that robe of light and brightness with which He seemed enveloped, with a holy confidence and love, yet without presumption. And Jesus delighted in this desire to detain Him, for He sought, as we have seen at Emmaus, to draw it out. Then the Lord, bidding all adieu, and blessing them, withdrew. And they, prostrating themselves before Him, besought Him soon to return to them. But they remained hungering and thirsting for their Lord, whose presence was wont to be so abundantly granted to them, calling Him back to them with sighs and longings. You see how often to-day you have kept Easter; for all these appearances were on Easter Day. But, perhaps, you have heard all this without realizing it, because you did not enter with sympathy into the mystery of the Passion. For I believe that if you had sympathized with His Passion, and kept your mind fixed and collected with regard to it, not scattered upon worldly, superfluous, and curious objects, you would in all these instances taste the joy of Easter. And this may take place in a measure on every Sunday, if on the Friday and Saturday you prepare yourself by meditating with all your powers on the Passion; for the Apostle especially says, “As ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.”

CHAPTER XCIII

How the Lord appeared to His Disciples on the Octave of Easter, and Thomas was then with them

AGAIN, on the eighth day of the Resurrection, the Lord Jesus appeared to His disciples, the doors being shut. And Thomas was with them, who was not there on the former occasion, and he—when they told him that they had seen the Lord—replied, “Unless I see in His Hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails,” etc., as recorded in the Gospel, “I will not believe.” Then the Good Shepherd, watchful over His little flock, says to them, “Peace be unto you.” Then saith He to Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger and behold My Hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My Side, and be not faithless, but believing.” Then Thomas fell down before Him, and touched the wounds of His Lord, and said, “My Lord and my God!” For he saw the manhood, and believed in the Godhead. Then he, too, confessed, as the others had done, his fault in having forsaken Him. But the Lord, raising him up, said, “Fear not; all sins are forgiven thee.” This doubting of Thomas was permitted for the benefit of others, that they might thereby have more evident proofs of the truth of the Resurrection. Behold our Lord, then, attentively, and observe His accustomed kindness, lowliness, and fervent love; how He shows His wounds to Thomas and the other disciples, that He may altogether remove the cloud of uncertainty from their hearts, both for their benefit and for ours. Moreover, our Lord preserved the marks of His wounds chiefly for these three reasons: that He might cause His Apostles to believe in His Resurrection; that He might show them to the Father, when He wills to appease Divine Wrath and

intercede for us as our Advocate; that He might show them to the reprobate on the Day of Judgment. The Lord Jesus, then, remains a while with His mother and His disciples, speaking of the things of the Kingdom of God, and they are filled with joy, hearing His sublime teaching, and beholding His countenance, radiant with joy and beauty. Attend well to every detail of this scene; behold Him, His disciples, His mother, Magdalen, etc. Stand yourself reverently and afar off; unless, perhaps, moved with pity, He should seem to call you nearer to Him. At length, He proposes that they go into Galilee, to Mount Tabor, as it is said, and that there they shall see Him. And, having blessed them, He departed from them. But they remained as before, full of hunger and thirst for His Presence, yet very much comforted.

CHAPTER XCIV

How the Lord appeared to His Disciples in Galilee

AFTER these things, as the disciples were journeying to the appointed place, again the Lord Jesus appeared to them, saying, “All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth: go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” And be of good courage, for “I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” When He appeared to them, they adored Him; and remained with Him with great delight. Behold them attentively, and consider all that passes between them, for the words are wonderful. He shows them how He is Lord of all; He gives them the command to preach: He gave them the form of Baptism; He instilled strength into them, by saying He would be with them always. You see how great sweetness He imparts to them, and how many remarkable proofs of love He shows them. When our Lord had finished these things, He gave them His blessing, and disappeared from their sight.

CHAPTER XCV

How the Lord appeared to His Disciples at the Sea of Tiberias

BUT the disciples still remained in Galilee. And on a certain occasion they went a-fishing on the sea of Tiberias, seven of them, and through the whole night caught nothing. But when it was morning, the Lord again appeared to them, standing on the sea-shore. Now observe what took place, for it is a scene full of beauty. Whereupon, the Lord inquired, if they had taken anything, and they answered, No. Then said He, “Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find.” They did so, therefore, and enclosed a great multitude of fishes. Then said John to Peter, “It is the Lord.” Then Peter, being naked, girt himself with his coat, and hastily cast himself into the sea to come to Him, but the others drew the boat to shore. And when they had landed, they saw a fish laid upon hot coals, and bread made ready for them, for the Lord had prepared it. Then He made them eat of the fish which had been taken and roasted, and, eating with them, He celebrated a joyful festival and banquet with them on the shore; and with His accustomed humility served them, handing them bread and breaking it, and doing the same with the fish. And they stood reverently by Him—these seven disciples—with great joy in the companionship of their Lord, eating with Him, beholding His beautiful and joyous countenance, and exulting in their hearts; they receive from His most sacred Hands this agreeable food, and are refreshed not less spiritually than bodily. O what a feast is this! Regard well every circumstance, and, as far as may be, be nourished with them. Attend, however, to what follows, for it is full of beauty and interest. For when this solemn feast was ended, the Lord says to Peter, “Lovest thou Me more than these?” And Peter answers, “Lord, Thou knowest that I love

Thee;” whereupon the Lord says to Him, “Feed my lambs,” etc. Thus, thrice questioning him, He committed to him His flock. In which act, consider the wonted kindness, charity, and humility of the Lord. You see clearly how diligently and affectionately He impresses upon and reiterates to Peter this charge, committing souls to his care.

After this, the Lord foretold to Peter His death, saying, “When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself,” etc.; signifying that by the suffering of the cross He should glorify God. And when Peter inquired about John, “What shall this man do?” the Lord replied, “If I will that he tarry till I come,”—that is, “I will that he shall not follow Me by the way of suffering, but that he shall rest in an old age and in contemplation.” But the other disciples gathered from this that he should not die; but such would be no great favour, since it is better to depart and be with Christ. You have seen how many, and how great things were done and said at this appearance. After this the Lord disappeared from their sight, and in the usual way returned, no doubt, to the Holy Fathers. But the disciples remained with great joy, and afterwards returned to Jerusalem, etc.

CHAPTER XCVI

How the Lord appeared to more than Five Hundred Brethren at once, and on the Appearances Generally

BUT again the Lord appeared to more than five hundred brethren at once, as the Apostle says; but where and when this Appearance took place, we are not told. But the gracious Lord, standing in the midst of them, preaching and speaking concerning the kingdom of God, filled them with great sweetness. You have thus twelve Appearances of our Lord from the Resurrection to the Ascension, besides the two to be treated in connection with the Ascension itself, making in all fourteen. You must remember, however, that two are only legendary. The Appearance to His mother is a matter of pious belief, not of scriptural authority. And the account of the Appearance to Joseph is only found in the so-called Gospel of Nicodemus. How the Lord appeared to James, the Apostle relates in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and S. Jerome records it; and this Appearance to the five hundred is written in the same place. All the other Appearances are in the Gospel. There is more yet, upon which you may piously meditate. For it is very probable that there are unrecorded Appearances, and that our Lord often visited His mother, disciples, and Magdalen, His beloved disciple, comforting and gladdening those who had been so grieved and terrified by His Passion. The same was thought by S. Augustine, who says of the time after the Resurrection, “Everything which happened is not recorded, His intercourse with them was frequent.” We can imagine, too, how the Holy Fathers rejoiced in the Incarnation; how especially Abraham and David delighted to see their promises fulfilled; how Jesus was born of a blessed

mother, through whom grace and salvation entered into the world. O what was their joy and delight, when they were witnesses of these things! Here again, as before, you can consider the kindness, love, and lowliness of the Lord (which virtues we have often pointed out, for they are ever observable in His conduct), in that, after He had conquered gloriously, and risen again, He yet vouchsafed to stay here forty days, prolonging His pilgrimage, in order that He might confirm and strengthen His disciples. For justly, after a career of so many years, after so many labours and afflictions, after such an ignominious and bitter death, the Conqueror might have returned at once in triumph to His Glory, and have despatched angels to comfort and strengthen His Apostles at His will. But His love would not permit this course: He willed personally to converse with them, appearing to them for forty days by many proofs, and speaking to them of the Kingdom of God. He did this for them, and for us too; but we pay but little heed to it. He loved thee vehemently, and is not loved in return; whereas, from such and so great a fire, we ought not only to be warmed, but to be inflamed. Now let us come to the Ascension.

CHAPTER XCVII

The Ascension of our Lord

CONCERNING the Ascension of our Lord it behoves you to re-ignite your devotion, and if you have already striven to be present in spirit, hearing His words and seeing His actions, you must now more than ever gather up the powers of your soul in meditating upon this event.

Now, this Mystery surpasses all the rest, as I shall clearly show you. Let this at least stimulate you to give your attention, that now our Lord is about to withdraw His bodily presence, having completed the days of His pilgrimage. Wherefore His words and actions should be very attentively considered. For every faithful soul ought to regard with watchful eyes her Spouse, her Lord and God, when He is about to leave her, contemplating His every word and act with the utmost attention, and with all the affection of her heart; and with increased devotion and lowliness to commend herself to Him, totally withdrawing her thoughts from all other subjects.

Thus, on the fortieth day after the Resurrection, the Lord Jesus, knowing that His hour was come, that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own, He loved them to the end. Therefore, taking with Him from the earthly Paradise the Holy Fathers and other souls, and giving His blessing to Elias and Enoch, who remained there, and still lived on, He came to His disciples who were in the upper room at Mount Zion, with His mother and others; and appearing to them, He manifested a desire before His departure to sit at meat with them, in token of His loving remembrance of them and joy in their company. Whilst all were eating and rejoicing in this last feast with their Lord, the Lord Jesus says to them, "It is time that I return to Him who sent Me; but you remain in this city until ye be endued with power from on high, for within a few days ye shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, as I have promised you. Afterwards ye shall go

through all the world, preaching My Gospel, baptizing those who believe, and ye shall be witnesses to Me even to the ends of the earth.” Also He upbraided them for their unbelief, because they believed not those who had seen Him risen, namely, His angels. This He does with an express purpose, when He was speaking to them of preaching, as though He would have them understand Him to say—“Much more ought you to have believed Angels, even before you saw Me; than the Gentiles to believe your preaching, which they will do without seeing Me.” In doing this, He had the further purpose of making them more humble through the consciousness of their fault; thus giving them, at His departure, a last instance of His love of humility, and in what an especial manner He willed that it should be cultivated. But when they asked Him about the future, He would not answer them, because it was not expedient for them to know it. Thus they remained together, eating, speaking, rejoicing before the presence of their Lord, but yet ill at ease through the thought of His departure. For they loved Him with such a tender love, that they could not even bear the mention of His leaving them without being overcome by it.

But what shall I say of His mother, who was haply near Him at this meal, and of course loved Him in a way none other could? Must not these words about going away have touched her very keenly, as we may image her reclining with her head upon her Son’s breast, full of maternal affection? For if John did this at the Supper, much more may we conceive that she might have thus reclined now; and that she begged Him, with many sighs and tears, “If Thou must go, take me with Thee.” And our Lord comforted her: “I pray thee, most beloved mother, grieve not at my departure, for I go to the Father. You must remain a time, confirming others in what thou knowest of Me, and then afterwards I will come to thee, and receive thee to glory.” To which she replied, “Thy will be done, most beloved Son. I am ready not only to remain, but to die, if I may benefit those for whom Thou hast died; but remember me.” Then the Lord comforted her, the disciples, Magdalen, and the other women, saying, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. I will not leave you comfortless. I go away, and I will come to you again, I will be with you always.”

At length, He says to them that they should go forth to the Mount of Olives, for it was from thence He willed to ascend; and then He disappeared from them. Then His mother and all the rest, without delay, went to the

appointed Mount, which is from Jerusalem about a league, and there again the Lord appeared to them. Lo, on this day you have two Appearances. He then, we can imagine, embraced His mother, and bade her adieu, and His mother most tenderly parted from Him. But the disciples, and Magdalen, and the rest, fell down, and gave vent to their grief, kissing His feet. Then He raised up His Apostles, and embraced them graciously.

Behold them now attentively, and all that happens. Consider, also, the Holy Fathers as present, though invisibly, and with what joy and reverence they regard the Lord's mother, and affectionately bless her, through whose instrumentality they have obtained so great a benefit. Consider, also, how they eye those exalted champions and leaders of the Divine army, whom our Lord chose out of all, to attack and subdue the whole world. At last, when all these mysteries had been accomplished, the Lord Jesus was to be withdrawn from them, and to ascend by His own power. Then His mother and all the others fell to the ground; and she said, "My Son, ever blessed Son, remember me." At His departure she could not refrain from tears, and yet she greatly rejoiced, because she saw her Son ascend thus gloriously into Heaven. And likewise His disciples said, "O Lord, for Thee we left all things; be mindful of us." But He, with uplifted Hands, and serene and joyous Face, crowned with royalty and beauty, was triumphantly borne into Heaven. Blessing them, He said, "Be steadfast and act manfully, for I will be always with you." Then He ascended, leading with Him a noble multitude, opening a way to them, as Micah the Prophet said. Thus the Lord, glorious, white and ruddy, splendid and radiant with joy, went before them, showing them the way; and they, singing and exulting most joyfully, followed Him, saying, "O sing unto God, and sing praises unto His Name: magnify Him that rideth upon the heavens, as it were upon an horse; praise Him in His Name, Jah, and rejoice before Him. O that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness, and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, Thou that art the Saviour of "them which put their trust in Thee," bringing forth Thy people with joy, and Thy chosen with gladness. "Set up Thyself above the heavens, O God, and Thy glory above the earth, that Thy beloved may be delivered." "Thou art gone up on High," making a prosperous journey for us, bringing us out into a wealthy place. Thou deliveredst the prisoners in Thy strength, giving us our desire. We will enter into Thy house, and in the sight of Thy

angels will praise Thee. Glory, praise and honour be to Thee, O Christ, King and Redeemer, Sing unto God, O ye kingdoms of the earth, sing unto the Lord.”

In the meanwhile Michael, leader of the Heavenly Court, entering into that Blessed Country, announces that the Lord was ascending. Behold, all the orders of spirits, in due gradation, come forth to meet Him; not one remained who did not come to meet the Lord; and bending before Him with all possible reverence, they conducted Him, with hymns and ineffable canticles. Who can describe the songs and strains with which they greeted Him? “Princes went before, joined with singers, and said, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. O Blessed King, who comest in the Name of the Lord. Now to Thee who reignest, behold, we chant our songs.

“Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Who sittest upon the cherubim, and beholdest the depths. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Worthy art Thou, O Lord, of all praise and honour, Alleluia, for Thou hast done gloriously, Alleluia. Let the heavens confess Thy wonderful works, O Lord, Alleluia. And Thy Power! Alleluia. Behold now the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord, Alleluia. To give thanks unto the Name of the Lord, and to say to Thee, Alleluia. To rejoice in the joy of Thy race, that Thou mayest be praised with Thine inheritance, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.” In songs and praises such as these, they honoured their Lord, exulting before Him, and singing from one side to another, they celebrated with all reverence a glorious Festival. And who shall describe their joy?

Who, too, can picture the delight of all these most blessed spirits and Holy Fathers, when they met together? For the supernal spirits, when they had shown reverence to our Lord, and finished their canticles of joy, addressed the Fathers, we may imagine, with great sweetness: “O princes of the people, we congratulate you that you are come hither, Alleluia. Ye are assembled around your God, Alleluia: and are greatly exalted, Alleluia. Sing to Him who hath ascended above the heaven of heavens, Alleluia, Alleluia.” And the Holy Fathers promptly replied, “O ye princes of the people of the Lord, Alleluia. Our guardians and defenders, Alleluia. Joy to you and peace, Alleluia. Sing ye, also, to our King, Alleluia. Exult in God our Defender, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.” Then, bending towards one another, they said, “We go with gladness into the house of the Lord, Alleluia, Alleluia. The venerable City of God shall receive us together,

Alleluia. We are the sheep of the Lord's pasture; let us enter into His gates and into His courts, Alleluia; with hymns and songs, Alleluia. For the Lord of Hosts is with us, Alleluia. He is our Protector, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia." See you, how all rejoice and sing. For, according to the Prophet, God hath gone up with a merry noise, and the Lord with the sound of the trumpet Our Lord Jesus ascended in their sight, for the consolation of His mother and disciples, that they might see Him as far as they could. And then "a cloud received Him out of their sight," and presently He was with the blessed spirits and Holy Fathers before mentioned, in His Country. For thus the Prophet's prediction runs, "Who makest the clouds Thy chariot, and walkest upon the wings of the wind." The wings of the wind are the summits of the wind; that is, the parts which precede and are swiftest. He then ascended more quickly, when the cloud received Him out of their sight. Then remained His mother, the disciples, Magdalen, and others, in adoration, and with fixed gaze intently watching Him, as He ascended up into heaven, and passed beyond their sight.

And oh, what a sight it must have been to have seen the Lord thus gloriously ascend! And what to have seen and heard those blessed spirits and holy souls, who ascended with Him! Perhaps such a sight would have been too much for the soul, and have burst its bonds of flesh, and have drawn it to the skies. And while they steadfastly looked up, behold, two angels stood by them in white apparel, and said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven." "Return, then, into the city, and wait as He bade you." Consider, then, how the Lord had a care for all. For no sooner had He disappeared from them, than immediately He despatched His angels to them, that they might be comforted by the angels' testimony with them to the truth of the Ascension of their Lord. His mother, if she heard the angelic message, might have humbly besought them to commend her to her Son; and they with reverence and willingness have received such a charge. Similarly, the Apostles, Magdalen, and the others, entreated them. But they disappeared, and then returned to the city, to Mount Zion, and their abode, as the Lord had bidden them.

But the Lord Jesus, with the whole aforesaid august and magnificent throng, having opened the gates of Paradise, which had hitherto been closed

against mankind, entered with triumph, and bending before the Father's Throne, said, "I give Thee thanks, O Father, Who hath given Me the victory over all My enemies. Behold our friends, who were held captive, I present to Thee; but to My brethren and disciples, whom I left in the world, I promised to send the Holy Spirit. I pray Thee, therefore, Father, fulfil this promise; I recommend them to Thee." Then, we may imagine the Father rising, and making His Son to sit at His Right Hand, and saying, "O Blessed Son, I have given to Thee all power and judgment, therefore dispose all things as Thou wilt, concerning Thy disciples and the Coming of the Holy Ghost." Then all the Holy Fathers, and most blessed spirits, who had fallen on their faces in adoration before the Father, arose, began anew their canticles, and sang praises before God. For if Moses and the children of Israel, after the passage of the Red Sea, sang a song unto the Lord, saying, "Let us sing to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously," etc.; and Miriam, the prophetess, his sister, and other women following her, with timbrels and dances, sang unto God; how much more should this be done now, when all enemies are overcome! Similarly, when David brought up the Ark of the Lord to Jerusalem, the whole people rightly chanted, and David, with his singers, struck their harps, and all sang unto the Lord, accompanied by harps and timbrels, and David danced "before the Lord with all his might;" how much more, then, would they now do this, who were truly with the Lord Himself! And if John, as it is related in the Apocalypse, heard a voice in heaven of an hundred and forty-four "harpers harping with their harps," who sang, as it were, a new song before the Throne of God and of the Lamb; whatever degree of joy may be signified by that, I cannot but imagine that a much greater joy would be the accompaniment of this mystery. They all sing, they all rejoice, they all are glad, all clap their hands, all dance, all exult with shouts of triumph. Truly now in the Heavenly Jerusalem is heard the canticle of gladness, and through all its streets is heard, from every tongue, Alleluia. Never from the foundation of the world was such a Feast celebrated, never a Passover so solemn, nor ever will there be such a day again, except, perhaps, the Day of Judgment, when all the elect shall be presented there, in glorified condition. And therefore I asserted in the beginning, that this Solemnity, all things being considered, outstrips all others. Run, if you will, through all the rest, and you will admit the truth of what I say. A great feast, a great Solemnity is the Incarnation of

our Lord, and the source of all good; but it was so to us, not to Him, for He was still enclosed in the chamber of the Virgin's womb. A great feast is the Nativity, but that also is so to us. For as far as He was concerned, we must compassionate Him—born to poverty, suffering, and reproach. Great, indeed, is the celebration of the Mystery of the Passion, because then He bore our sins. For, as Gregory says, His Birth would have been no advantage to us, had He not redeemed us; but on account of the most cruel torments and most shameful death which He endured, it could neither be to Himself, nor ought it to be to us, a subject of joy and gladness. Great, too, exceeding great, is the true Paschal Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Himself, both on His own account and for us; because He appeared triumphing gloriously, and we were justified thereby. Very venerable, indeed, is this Festival, and of it alone the Church sings, "This is the Day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it," according to S. Augustine's comment. Yet this Day of the Ascension is holier than all the rest, and greater; and for this reason. True, that the Lord rose again at Easter, yet He still remained as a pilgrim upon earth; still the gate of Paradise was shut; still were the Holy Fathers not suffered to go to the Father, all of which was accomplished at the Ascension. And if you carefully consider the relation of these mysteries, all previous acts and sufferings of Christ tended to this end, without the attainment of which they were incomplete. For heaven and earth, and all things therein, were made for man; but man was made to obtain glory. Yet till this Day, none had ever attained it since the Fall, however just he might have been. You see, then, how great and wonderful is this Day. Likewise, also, a great Festival is Whit-Sunday, and one which the Church solemnizes with much joy; and rightly so, for then she received the highest Gift, the Holy Ghost. But this was for us, and not for Him. This Day's Festival, however, is rightly the most glorious Feast of our Lord Jesus Christ, for to-day He began to sit at the Right Hand of the Father, and ceased to be a Wayfarer.

The Ascension is likewise, in a peculiar manner, the Festival of all the heavenly spirits, because they received a new joy from their Lord, whom they had not seen there before, in the Form of Humanity. And because to-day He began to restore their ranks, which had been broken through the Fall of their brethren, and which were now filled up with such a mighty company of blessed ones, and especially by those illustrious Patriarchs,

Prophets, and holy souls who were to-day first introduced into the Heavenly Fatherland. If, then, we keep the Festival of a single Saint who has been translated into heaven, how much more should we celebrate the entrance of a numberless host, yea, of the Holy of Holies Himself! It is the Feast, too, of the Blessed Virgin, who saw to-day her Son exalted, crowned with a Royal Diadem, as true Lord of all, ascending above all. It is also properly our own Festival, for our human nature was to-day exalted above the heavens, because, unless Christ had ascended, that gift of the Holy Ghost which we so rightly celebrate with great solemnity, we could not have received. For He Himself said to His disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." To strengthen my words, I will bring forward the statement of S. Bernard, in his sermon on the Ascension of the Lord: "This solemnity, dearest brethren, is truly glorious. It is the consummation and completion of all other mysteries; it is the happy conclusion of the whole pilgrimage of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. Rightly do we keep with solemnity and rejoicing the day when the Sun above the heavens, the Sun of Righteousness, unveiled Himself to our gaze in this world. Great, indeed, is the joy, and above measure our exultation, when, putting off the sackcloth, He girds Himself with gladness, and dedicates the firstfruits of our resurrection. But what to me are all these Festivals, if I am still bound to live upon the earth? I say, then, to dwell thus in exile seems to me not much less tolerable than hell itself. In short, 'If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.' Do you see, then, how of all Festivals this day's is the sum, a day of results, which puts to account the grace which has been already obtained? As all He did was for us, Who for us was born, so the Ascension was wrought for our sake, and brings us good." Thus S. Bernard.

Manifestly, then, this day is more solemn than all the rest. And the soul which will love the Lord Jesus will rejoice more to-day than on any day of the year. Therefore Christ said to His disciples, "If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father." No day, then, in the Heavenly Country was ever so joyously solemnized, I believe, as this; and this joy and exultation continued till the day of Pentecost. In this manner you may meditate on the Ascension. The Ascension was at the hour of twelve, for at the third hour He sat at meat with His disciples. Although all in Heaven ever rejoice beyond all description, yet we may picture to ourselves a

special joy on the Day of the Ascension to the sixth hour of the following day—a joy amongst the Angels, as our Lord showed them some special favour and condescension; in like manner, on the second, amongst the Archangels; on the third, amongst the Principalities; on the fourth, amongst the Powers; on the fifth, amongst the Virtues; on the sixth, amongst the Dominions; on the seventh, amongst the Thrones; on the eighth, amongst the Cherubim; on the ninth, amongst the Seraphim: which are the nine orders of Angels. And this rejoicing, perhaps, lasted till the hour of twelve on the vigil of Pentecost. And then the Holy Fathers kept the Festival till the third hour of the Lord's Day.

CHAPTER XCVIII

Of the Mission of the Holy Ghost

WHEN all these things were ended, the Lord Jesus said to the Father, “My Father, remember the promise which I made, concerning the Holy Spirit, to My brethren.” To Whom the Father, we can imagine, replied, “It is my delight to fulfil this Promise, and the time has arrived; let, therefore, the Holy Spirit descend upon Thy disciples, fill them, console them, fortify them, instruct them with, and confer upon them, the fulness of virtues and heavenly joys. Immediately He came, descending in fiery tongues upon the hundred and twenty disciples who were assembled together, filling them with all joy, strengthening them by His power, teaching them, inflaming them, illuminating them, so that they should go throughout the world, and subject it in great part to themselves.

Yet the heavenly citizens continued to praise the Lord afterwards, and never desisted, and keep the days of gladness with unceasing solemnity and thanksgiving, and with the voice of praise. For it is written, “Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be always praising Thee.” Let us, therefore, hasten to enter into that rest, where such joy flows unceasingly; let us pant after that Country with all our powers. Let us hate the bondage of this vile and miserable body; let us not bestow any anxious care upon it, for it keeps us here in prison, exiles from such blessedness. Let us say, then, with the Apostle, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” And again, “Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” And again, “I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ.” Let us, too, desire this dissolution, and continually seek it from the Lord: for in our own strength we are unable to obtain it with safety. And again, let us die, at least, to the world, and to its pomps and lusts. Let us detach ourselves with a brave and steadfast heart from things

which are perishing, and from the miserable and transient consolations of this visible world, which poison and lacerate our souls. Let us ascend in mind with the Lord, or rather to the Lord, and with Him let our conversation be in heaven. If thus we act, we may trust that we shall not always be strangers and pilgrims; but in the time of visitation, He will deign to take us to Himself—He of Whom we speak, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is above all God blessed for ever, and to be praised for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER XCIX

The Exciting of Desire for the Heavenly Country, through a Longing for Death

YOU have hitherto, well-beloved, gone through a great part of the Life of the Lord Jesus, in meditations. Use them reverently, joyously, willingly, stopping wherever your devotion is excited, and occupying yourself with the thoughts and affections which come to you. For this must be the business of your life, this the foundation on which you build the great fabric of your spiritual life. You must begin with this, to whatever heights you may desire to ascend afterwards, as in many places I have stated. For meditations on the Life of Christ not only sweetly nourish the soul, but they are also the preparation for a higher food. For the things which our Lord did in the Flesh are introductory to those which are wrought in the Spirit, and the ladder by which alone you can attain to contemplate them; so that you must give yourself for a while to the contemplation of His visible Life. As S. Bernard says, “I think that the principal cause why the invisible God should be seen in Flesh, and converse with men, was that those who could only love after a material manner, might have their affections drawn away from carnal objects, and fastened upon the love of His own Flesh; and that by this means He might wean them from what was wrong, and lead them afterwards to a higher love for Himself, even to the love of spiritual things.” And again, “He pointed out to His disciples a higher degree of love when He said, ‘It is the spirit which quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.’ ” And again, “In devotion of the flesh, there is for a while consolation, to him who has not the quickening spirit, in, the measure in which those have it who say, ‘The Lord Jesus is the Spirit before our face,’ or again, ‘If we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.’ ”

Indeed, we are not able to love Christ, even in the Flesh, without the Holy Spirit, and without a certain satisfaction. For the measure of this devotion is that its sweetness fills the heart, the whole affections being fastened upon Himself, and thus drawn away from all other charms. This is to love Him ‘with all the heart.’ For if I prefer aught else, whether of natural affection or pleasure, to the Flesh of my Lord, and this affection hinders me from fulfilling those things which by word and example He taught me, is it not clear that I by no means love Him with all my heart, when my heart is divided—a part cleaving to Him, a part turned aside to self?” In fine, He says, “ ‘He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me.’ Therefore, in brief, to love with all our heart, is to postpone everything which charms us, in ourselves, or in others, to the sacred love of the Humanity of Christ. And I include, also, the glory of the world; for the glory of the world is the glory of the flesh, and those who find pleasure in it are doubtless carnal.”

You see, however, that meditation is spoken of as carnal, which is on the outward actions of Christ, only as contrasted with that which is on spiritual things; not to disparage devotion to the first, but to lead the soul on with a still greater fervour to the second, so that the affections, and the whole being, may be immersed therein. But good, indeed, is meditation on the Life of Christ, by which a carnal life is destroyed, and the world despised and overcome; by which also the mind is fortified, instructed in virtues, and receives an increase of power, as I have said in my Preface. Meditate, therefore, on the Life of Christ; let this be your sole aim and occupation, your rest, your food, your pursuit. For from this you will not only obtain the blessings of which I have spoken; not only will it be to you a preparation for contemplation upon the Heavenly Country and the Divine Majesty, but it will also be your joy and unfailing consolation. For those who ascend to higher flights of meditation ought ever and anon to turn to Christ’s Life. To seem for a moment to be able to rise beyond it without it, would be a mark of great pride. Thus, ever bear in mind, what has again and again been inculcated in the treatise on Contemplation, about the Sacred Humanity of Christ, which S. Bernard, who was a most profound contemplative, ever taught He evidently, from his sermons, embraced and extolled without measure devotion to the Life of our Lord.

CHAPTER C

On the Way of Meditating on the Life of Christ, and on the Conclusion of this work

FINALLY, I would provide you with a plan which you may adopt in meditating on the foregoing subjects, for fear that you might attempt to run through the whole at once, and be in consequence overwhelmed with the great weight of it. These meditations ought to occupy the space of one week, entirely given to them.

You must know, then, that it is sufficient to meditate on the actions of our Lord, and the circumstances, as they are given in the Gospel history, rendering yourself present at the scenes, as if you actually saw and heard all that actually passed, or which naturally occurs to you as likely to have happened. It is not necessary that you should introduce into your meditation every moral reflection or authority which I may have brought forward, unless they seem to you to bear clearly upon the virtue you are seeking to embrace, and the vice you are striving to abjure. You may choose, rather, some quiet time for these meditations, late in the day, when you may be able to learn my reflections and quotations, and to commit them to memory. It is fitting that you should thus make use of them; for they are very beautiful, and calculated to instruct you in your whole spiritual life.

You may divide the meditations in the following manner. On Monday, you may go as far as the Flight into Egypt, and stop there. On Tuesday, continue your meditations to the Opening of the Book in the Synagogue. On Wednesday, go on to the ministry of Mary and Martha. On Thursday, from that point pursue the history to the Passion. On Friday and Saturday, to the Resurrection. On the Sunday, take the Resurrection, and continue to the end. Thus, by going through these meditations weekly, you would become

familiar with them; and the longer this custom be continued, the more readily will they come to your hand, and the greater will be the sweetness you will derive from them.

Thus, hold converse gladly with the Lord Jesus, and after the example of the blessed Cecilia, strive ever to keep His Life laid up in your heart.

But it is time to seal this book, but not with my own words; it must be concluded by drawing again our nourishment from S. Bernard, from whom we have already gathered flowers, so many and so fair. The conclusion shall be in His Name, Who is the sealed Book, our Lord Jesus Christ, to whose praise the whole book is written. Thus S. Bernard says of that Blessed Name, “ ‘Thy Name is as ointment poured forth.’ There is, doubtless, a likeness between oil and the Name of the Spouse, else the Holy Spirit would not have compared them together. There are three properties of oil, in all of which I trace a resemblance to the effects of the Name of the Spouse: oil gives light, food, and unction, unless you have any better explanation to offer; it feeds the fire, it nourishes the flesh, it soothes pain; it is for light, food, and medicine. Now, see the same in the Name of the Spouse: when preached, it gives light; when meditated upon, it gives food; when invoked, it softens and is as unction. Let us glance at each of these effects in particular. Whence, think you, throughout the world, did such a sudden and so clear a light of faith spring forth, except from the preaching of the Name of Jesus? Was it not by the light of this Name that God called us ‘into His marvellous light’? To those who had been illumined, and in this Light had seen light, did not S. Paul rightly say, ‘Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the world’?” And again, “Nor is the Name of Jesus only light, but it is also food. Do you not feel that you gain strength from it, as often as you call it to mind? What is there which nourishes the soul that muses on it, like this Name? What so repairs our wearied senses, strengthens our virtues, transforms our character, and feeds all pure affections? Dry is all food of the soul, if it is not mixed with oil; all is insipid, if it be not seasoned with salt. When you write, I have no pleasure, unless I read the Name of Jesus therein. If you dispute or confer, I have no interest in your labours, unless the sound of Jesus’ Name be therein. Jesus is honey in the mouth, music in the ear, joy in the heart; yes, and medicine also. Is any of you sad? let Jesus come into his heart, and flow thence from his lips. Behold, the very dawn of that Name is light, and chases every

cloud away, and brings the clear sky! Has any fallen into grievous sin, does he run towards the deadly snare of despair? let him call on the Name of Jesus, and immediately his life will revive. Who ever could stand before this saving Name, and still resist its power, and remain in hardness of heart, deadness of sloth, rancour of mind, and languor of lukewarmness? Who, when the fount of tears perchance refused to flow, by invoking the Name of Jesus, did not find them issue forth anew with great abundance, and flow more sweetly? Who, when trembling and fearing in the presence of danger, ever failed to recover confidence, and banish alarm, by calling on this Name of power? Who, I pray you, when tossed and wavering with doubts, ever called upon this Name of light, without at once attaining the clearness of certitude? Who, when on the verge of distrust in adversity, ever heard the accents of that Name, without gaining back his fortitude? Indeed, the Name of Jesus is the medicine of all these diseases and infirmities of the soul. Let me briefly prove this. ‘Call upon Me,’ says He, ‘in the time of trouble; so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise Me.’ There is nothing like the Name of Jesus for restraining anger, assuaging the swellings of pride, healing the wound of envy, restraining the course of wantonness, quenching the flame of lust, moderating the thirst of covetousness, and putting to flight all lasciviousness. For when I name Jesus, I set before myself the image of the Man, meek and lowly, kind of heart, sober, chaste, merciful, peerless in purity and holiness, and at the same time, the Almighty God, who heals by His example, and strengthens us by His help. When the Name of Jesus is uttered by me, this is the Form which rises up before my mind. From His Humanity, then, I take Him as my Example; from His Divinity, I take Him for my help: the two form to me a sort of compound, the one imparting to the other a certain piquancy, and of both I make for myself a confection, more healing than any remedy of the physicians. This is thy electuary, O my soul, contained in the little vessel, as it were, of the Holy Name. Jesus is, indeed, a Name of Salvation; no plague so virulent, but that this Name can cure thee of it. Let it be ever in thy memory, ever in thy hand, so that all thy senses and actions may be directed towards Jesus. How art thou invited! —‘Set Me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm.’ But this I will treat elsewhere. Here, then, now you find whence you may be healed, both in your hand and heart. You have, then, in the Name of Jesus, the means of correcting what is bad, and perfecting what is lacking; a preservative of

your senses from corruption, a restoration, if already corrupted.” And again, “How fair art Thou to Thy angels, O Lord Jesus, in the Form of God, in the day of Thine Eternity, in the splendours of Thy Saints, Whose birth is before the morningstar, the Brightness and Image of the Substance of the Father, the perpetual and cloudless Brightness of Eternal Life! How fair art Thou, my Lord, even in the very surrender of this Thy Beauty! For verily Thou didst empty Thyself when Thou didst lay aside the natural Radiance of Thy unfailing glory; then did Thy goodness become more conspicuous; then did Thy love shine out with greater brilliancy; then did Thy grace in copious streams flow forth from Thee. How dear to me, Star of Jacob, in Thy rising! How bright, Thou Flower from the root of Jesse! How sweet the light with which Thou didst visit me, when I sat in darkness, O Dayspring from on high! How lovely, how marvellous, Thy Heavenly Power! In Thy Conception of the Holy Ghost, in Thy Birth of the Virgin, in the innocence of Thy Life, in the rivers of Thy Doctrine, in the coruscations of Thy miracles, in the revelations of Thy Sacraments! How red in Thy setting, Thou Sun of Righteousness, how glorious in Thy apparel, when rising out of the heart of the earth! At last, O King of Glory, the highest heavens receive Thee. And how, in the presence of so many marvels, shall not my bones say, ‘O Lord, who is like unto Thee?’ Such, I think, must have been the affections with which the spouse gazed upon her Beloved, when she exclaimed, ‘Behold, Thou art fair, my Love; behold, Thou art fair.’ Nor with such thoughts only as these, but with others also which are above our conception, as she caught sight of a Higher Beauty which is beyond the reach of our vision, and of which we have no experience. By the very repetition of the exclamation, ‘Thou art fair,’ is represented the twofold Beauty, Human and Divine.” Thus far S. Bernard. Thanks be to God, Who liveth for ever and ever. Amen.

THE LIFE OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

SAINT BONAVENTURE

AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK.

TRANSLATED BY E. GURNEY SALTER

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THE LIFE OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

PROLOGUE

1. The grace of God our Saviour hath in these latter days appeared in His servant Francis unto all such as be truly humble, and lovers of holy Poverty, who, adoring the overflowing mercy of God seen in him, are taught by his ensample to utterly deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live after the manner of Christ, thirsting with unwearied desire for the blessed hope. For God Most High regarded him, as one that truly was poor and of a contrite spirit, with so great condescension of His favour as that not only did He raise him up in his need from the dust of his worldly way of life, but also made him a true professor, leader, and herald of Gospel perfection. Thus He gave him for a light unto believers, that by bearing witness of the light he might prepare for the Lord the way of light and peace in the hearts of the faithful. For Francis, even as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, shining with the bright beams of his life and teaching, by his dazzling radiance led into the light them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, and, like unto the rainbow giving light in the bright clouds, set forth in himself the seal of the Lord's covenant. He preached the gospel of peace and salvation unto men, himself an Angel of the true peace, ordained of God to follow in the likeness of the Forerunner, that, preparing in the desert the way of sublimest Poverty, he might preach repentance by his ensample and words alike. For, firstly, he was endowed with the gifts of heavenly grace; next, enriched by the merits of triumphant virtue; filled with the spirit of prophecy and appointed unto angelic ministries; thereafter, wholly set on fire by the kindling of the Seraph, and, like the prophet, borne aloft in a chariot of fire; wherefore it is reasonably proven, and clearly apparent from the witness of his whole life, that he came in the spirit and power of Elias.

In like wise, he is thought to be not unmeetly set forth in the true prophecy of that other friend of the Bridegroom, the Apostle and Evangelist John,

under the similitude of the Angel ascending from the sunrising and bearing the seal of the Living God. For at the opening of the sixth seal, I saw, saith John in the Apocalypse, another Angel ascending from the sunrising and bearing the seal of the Living God.

2. Now that this Angel was indeed that messenger of God, beloved of Christ, our ensample and the world's wonder, Francis, the servant of God, we may with full assurance conclude, when we consider the heights of lofty saintliness whereunto he attained, and whereby, living among men, he was an imitator of the purity of the Angels, and was also set as an ensample unto them that do perfectly follow after Christ. That this belief should be faithfully and devoutly held we are convinced by the vocation that he shewed to call to weeping and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth, and to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry, by the sign of his penitent's Cross and habit fashioned like unto a Cross. Moreover, it is further confirmed, with unanswerable witness unto its truth, by the seal of the likeness of the Living God, to wit, of Christ Crucified, the which was imprinted on his body, not by the power of nature or the skill of art, but rather by the marvellous might of the Spirit of the Living God.

3. Feeling myself unworthy and insufficient to relate the life most worthy of all imitation of this most venerable man, I should have in no wise attempted it, had not the glowing love of the Brethren moved me thereunto, and the unanimous importunity of the Chapter General incited me, and that devotion compelled me, which I am bound to feel for our holy Father. For I, who remember as though it happened but yesterday how I was snatched from the jaws of death, while yet a child, by his invocation and merits, should fear to be convicted of the sin of ingratitude did I refrain from publishing his praises. And this was with me the chief motive for undertaking this task, to wit, that I, who own my life of body and mind to have been preserved unto me by God through his means, and have proved his power in mine own person, and knew the virtues of his life, might collect as best I could, albeit I could not fully, his deeds and words,—fragments, as it were, overlooked in part, in part scattered,—that they might not be utterly lost on the death of those that lived with the servant of God.

4. Accordingly, that the true story of his life might be handed down unto posterity by me the more assuredly and clearly, I betook me unto the place of his birth, and there did hold diligent converse with his familiar friends that were yet living, touching the manner of life of the holy man and his passing away; and with those in especial that were well acquainted with his holiness, and were his chief followers, who may be implicitly believed by reason of their well-known truthfulness and approved uprightness. But in relating the things that through His servant God vouchsafed to work, I deemed it best to shun all fantastic ornaments of style, forasmuch as that the devotion of the reader increaseth more by a simple than by an ornate speech. Nor have I always woven together the history according unto chronology, that I might avoid confusion, but I rather endeavoured to preserve a more coherent order, setting down sometimes facts of divers kinds that belong unto the same period, sometimes facts of the same kind that belong unto divers periods, as they seemed best to fit in together.

5. Now the beginning of the life of Francis, its course, and its consummation, are divided into fifteen chapters, as set down below, and thuswise described.

The first treateth of his manner of life in the secular state.

The second, of his perfect conversion unto God, and of the repairing of the three churches.

The third, of the founding of his Religion, and sanction of the Rule.

The fourth, of the advancement of the Order under his hand, and of the confirmation of the Rule already sanctioned.

The fifth of the austerity of his life, and of how all created things afforded him comfort.

The sixth of his humility and obedience, and of the divine condescensions shewn unto him at will.

The seventh, of his love for Poverty, and of the wondrous supplying of his needs.

The eighth, of the kindly impulses of his piety, and of how the creatures lacking understanding seemed to be made subject unto him.

The ninth, of his ardent love, and yearning for martyrdom.

The tenth, of his zeal and efficacy in prayer.

The eleventh, of his understanding of the Scriptures, and of his spirit of prophecy.

The twelfth, of the efficacy of his preaching, and of his gift of healing.

The thirteenth, of the sacred stigmata.

The fourteenth, of his sufferings and death.

The fifteenth, of his canonisation, and the translation of his body.

Thereafter is added some account of the miracles shewn after his blessed departure.

Chapter I

OF HIS MANNER OF LIFE IN THE SECULAR STATE

1. There was a man in the city of Assisi, by name Francis, whose memory is blessed, for that God, graciously preventing him with the blessings of goodness, delivered him in His mercy from the perils of this present life, and abundantly filled him with the gifts of heavenly grace. For, albeit in his youth he was reared in vanity amid the vain sons of men, and, after gaining some knowledge of letters, was appointed unto a profitable business of merchandise, nevertheless, by the aid of the divine protection, he went not astray among the wanton youths after the lusts of the flesh, albeit given up unto pleasures; nor among the covetous merchants, albeit intent on his gains, did he put his trust in money and treasure. For there was divinely implanted in the heart of the young Francis a certain generous compassion toward the poor, the which, growing up with him. from infancy, had so filled his heart with kindness that, when he came to be no deaf hearer of the Gospel, he was minded to give unto all that asked of him, in especial if they pleaded the love of God. But once on a time, when he had been busied with the cares of his trading, and, contrary unto his wont, had sent empty away a certain beggar who besought an alms for the love of God, he forthwith, returning unto his pitiful mind, ran after him, and bestowed alms in merciful wise upon him; promising unto the Lord God that thenceforward he would never, while he could, refuse any that asked of him, pleading the love of God. And this promise with unwearied goodness he did observe until his death, thereby winning abundant increase of the love and grace of God. For he was wont to say in after time, when he had perfectly put on Christ, that, even while he was in the secular state, he could

scarce ever hear words telling of the love of God, and remain unmoved in heart. Assuredly the charm of his gentleness and his courtly bearing, his submissiveness and docility surpassing men's wont, his open-handed largesse even beyond his means, were all clear tokens of the fair disposition of the youth, and seemed to be a presage of the abundance of divine blessing that should thereafter be poured out more richly upon him.

A certain citizen of Assisi, a simpleton as was believed, yet one taught of God, whensoever he met Francis going through the city, would doff his cloak and spread the garment before his feet, declaring that Francis was worthy of all honour, as one that should ere long do mighty deeds, and was on this account to be splendidly honoured by all the faithful.

2. But as yet Francis knew not the intent of God concerning him, forasmuch as he was both drawn away unto external things by his father's calling, and weighed down toward earthly things by the corruption inborn in our nature, and had not yet learned to contemplate heavenly things, nor accustomed himself to taste of divine. And, because the infliction of tribulation giveth understanding unto the spirit, the hand of the Lord was upon him and the changes of the right hand of the Most High, afflicting his body with protracted sickness, that so He might prepare his soul for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Now when he had regained his bodily strength, and had made ready for himself in his wonted fashion meet apparel, he met a certain soldier, of noble birth, but poor and ill-clad; whereupon, compassionating his poverty, with a kindly impulse he forthwith did off his garments and put them on him, thus in one act fulfilling a twofold ministry of kindness, insomuch as he both covered the shame of a noble knight, and relieved the destitution of a poor man.

3. Now on the night following, when he had yielded himself unto sleep, the divine mercy shewed him a fair and great palace, together with military accoutrements adorned with the sign of the Cross of Christ, thus setting forth unto him that the mercy he had shewn unto the poor soldier for the love of the King Most High was to be recompensed by this peerless reward. Accordingly, when he enquired whose were these things, answer was made him by a divine declaration that they all were his own and his soldiers.' Then, waking at early morn,—since he had not yet practised his mind in

examining the divine mysteries, and knew not how to pass through the appearance of things seen unto the beholding of the truth of things unseen,—he accounted this strange vision a token of great good fortune. Wherefore he purposed, being as yet ignorant of the divine counsel, to betake himself into Apulia, unto a certain munificent Count, hoping in his service to win glory in arms, as the vision shewn unto him had betokened. With but little delay, he set forth on his journey and had gone as far as the neighbouring city; there he heard the Lord speaking unto him by night as with the voice of a friend, and saying: “Francis, who can do better for thee, the lord or the servant, the rich man or the poor ?” And when Francis had made reply that alike the lord and the rich man could do the best, the Voice answered forthwith: “Why, then, dost thou leave the Lord for the servant, the rich God for a poor mortal?” And Francis said: “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” And the Lord said unto him: “Return unto thy country, for the vision that thou hast seen betokeneth that which shall be spiritually wrought, and is to be fulfilled in thee not by mortal counsel, but by divine.” So, when it was morning, he returned in haste toward Assisi, confident and rejoicing, awaiting the will of the Lord.

4. Thenceforward he withdrew him from the stir of public business, devoutly praying the heavenly mercy that it would deign to shew him that which he ought to do. And so by the constant practice of prayer the flame of heavenly yearning was mightily kindled within him, and for the love of his heavenly fatherland he now contemned all earthly things as naught; for he felt that he had found the hid treasure and, like a wise merchant man, meditated selling all that he had to buy the pearl that he had found. But he knew not yet how to compass this, except that it was whispered unto his spirit that spiritual merchandise hath its beginning in the contempt of the world, and that the warfare of Christ is to be begun by victory over self.

5. Now on a day while he was riding over the plain that lieth beneath the city of Assisi, he met a certain leper, and this unforeseen meeting filled him with loathing. But when he recalled the purpose of perfection that he had even then conceived in mind, and remembered that it behoved him first of all to conquer self, if he were fain to become the soldier of Christ, he leapt from his horse and ran to embrace him. When the leper stretched forth his

hand as though to receive an alms, he kissed it, and then put money therein. Then forthwith mounting his horse, he looked round him on all sides, and the plain was spread before him unbroken, and no trace of that leper might he see. Then, filled with wonder and joy, he began devoutly to chant praises unto the Lord, purposing from this to rise ever unto greater heights. From that time forth, he would seek lonely places, dear unto mourners, and there he devoted himself without ceasing to groanings which cannot be uttered, and, after long importunity in prayer, won an answer from the Lord. For while one day he was thus praying in seclusion, and in his exceeding fervour was wholly absorbed in God, there appeared unto him Christ Jesus in the likeness of One Crucified. Beholding Him, his soul was melted within him, and so deeply was the remembrance of Christ's Passion imprinted inwardly on his heart that from that hour, whensoever he recalled the Crucifixion of Christ, he could scarce refrain from tears and from groaning aloud; even as he himself in after time told his friends, when he was drawing nigh his end. For in sooth by this vision the man of God understood that Gospel saying to be addressed unto him: "If thou wilt come after Me, deny thyself, and take up thy cross, and follow Me."

6. From that time forth, he put on the spirit of poverty, the feeling of humility, and the love of inward godliness. For whereas aforetime not only the company, but even the distant sight, of lepers had inspired him with violent loathing, now, for the sake of Christ Crucified,—Who, saith the prophet, appeared despised, and marred as a leper,—and that he might fully vanquish self, he would render unto the lepers humble and kindly services in his benevolent goodness. For he would often visit their dwellings, and bestow alms upon them with a bountiful hand, and with a deep impulse of pity would kiss their hands and faces. Unto poor folk that begged of him, he was fain to give not his goods alone, but his very self, at times stripping off his garments, at times tearing or cutting them, to bestow upon them, when he had naught else at hand. Poor priests, moreover, he would succour reverently and piously, more especially with ornaments for the altar, whereby he both became a sharer in the divine worship, and supplied the needs of the worshippers. Now about this time he was visiting, with devout reverence, the shrine of the Apostle Peter, and beheld a host of beggars before the doors of the church; thereupon, constrained in part by gentle

piety, in part led by the love of poverty, he bestowed his own garments on one of the neediest, and, clad in his rags, passed that day in the midst of the beggars, with unwonted gladness of spirit; that so, despising worldly repute, he might attain by gradual steps unto Gospel perfection. He kept right strict watch over the mortification of the flesh, that he might bear the Cross of Christ, the which he bore inwardly in his heart, outwardly also in his body. So all these things were wrought by the man of God, Francis, ere yet he had separated himself from the world in habit or way of life.

Chapter II

OF HIS PERFECT CONVERSION UNTO GOD, AND OF THE REPAIRING OF THE THREE CHURCHES

1. Forasmuch as the servant of the Most High had none to instruct him in this way except Christ, His mercy was now further vouchsafed unto him in visitations of His sweet grace. For on a certain day, when he had gone forth to meditate in the fields, he was walking nigh the church of Saint Damian, which from its exceeding great age was threatening to fall, and, at the prompting of the Spirit, went within to pray. Prostrating himself before an Image of the Crucified, he was filled with no small consolation of spirit as he prayed. And with eyes full of tears he gazed up, and he heard with his bodily ears a Voice proceeding from that Cross, saying thrice: “Francis, go and repair My House, which, as thou seest, is falling utterly into ruin.” Francis trembled, being alone in the church, and was astonished at the sound of such a wondrous Voice, and, perceiving in his heart the might of the divine speech, was carried out of himself in ecstasy. When at length he came unto himself again, he prepared to obey, and devoted himself wholly unto the behest to repair the material church; howbeit, the principal intent of the message had regard unto that Church which Christ had purchased with His own blood, even as the Holy Spirit taught him, and as he himself afterward revealed unto the Brethren.

Accordingly he rose up, and, fortifying himself with the sign of the Cross, he put together cloth stuffs for sale, and hastened unto the city that is called Foligno, and there sold the goods that he had brought and the horse whereon he had ridden. Then this joyful merchant, putting together his

gains, departed on his return for Assisi, and there did reverently enter the church concerning whose repair he had received the command. Finding there a poor priest, he shewed him due reverence, and proffered him the money for the repair of the church, and the use of the poor, humbly petitioning that he would permit him to sojourn with him for a time. The priest granted him to sojourn there, but, for fear of his parents, refused the money, whereupon that true despiser of monies threw it on a window-ledge, valuing it no more than dust that is trodden under foot.

2. But when his father learnt that the servant of God was tarrying with the priest aforesaid, he was sore vexed in spirit, and ran unto the place. And Francis, being yet but a newly-recruited soldier of Christ, when he heard the threats of them that pursued him, and knew beforehand of their coming, was fain to give place unto wrath, and hid himself in a certain secret pit; therein for some days he lay concealed, beseeching the Lord without ceasing, and with floods of tears, that He would deliver his soul from the hands of them that pursued him, and would by His gracious favour fulfill the holy purposes wherewith He had inspired him. Then, filled with an overflowing joy he began to blame himself for his craven sloth, and, leaving his hiding-place, and casting aside his fear, he took his way toward the city of Assisi. But when the townsfolk beheld him unkempt in appearance, and changed in mind, and on this account deemed him to have lost his senses, they rushed upon him with mud of the streets and stones, and mocked him with loud shouts as a fool and madman. But the servant of the Lord, not moved or overborne by any insults, passed through all as one deaf unto them. When his father heard these outcries, he ran out at once, not to deliver him, but rather to destroy him; laying aside all compunction, he dragged him into the house, and there afflicted him first with words, then with stripes and bonds. But Francis was thereby rendered but the more eager and valiant to carry out that which he had begun, remembering that saying of the Gospel: “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

3. After a little space, on his father’s departure from the country, his mother,—who misliked her husband’s dealings, and deemed it hopeless to soften the unyielding constancy of her son,—freed him from his bonds, and let

him go forth. Then he, giving thanks unto the Lord Almighty, returned unto the place where he had been afore. When his father returned, and found him not in the house, heaping reproaches on his wife, he ran in fury unto that place, intending, if he could not bring him back, at least to drive him from the province. But Francis strengthened of God of his own accord came forth to meet his raging father, crying aloud that he cared naught for his bonds and stripes, yea more, protesting that he would gladly endure all hardships for the sake of Christ. Accordingly, when his father saw that he could not bring him back, he turned his thoughts unto the recovery of the money, the which, when he had at length found it on the window-ledge, somewhat soothed his rage, the thirst of avarice being relieved, as it were, by a draught of money.

4. Then this father according unto the flesh was fain to take this son of grace, now stripped of his wealth, before the Bishop of the city, that into his hands he might resign his claim unto his inheritance, and render up all that had been his. This that true lover of poverty shewed himself right ready to do, and coming into the Bishop's presence, he brooked no delays, he was kept back of none, tarried for no speech, nor spake himself, but at once did off all his garments, and restored them unto his father. Then was the man of God seen to have a hairshirt next his skin under his rich apparel. Yea more, as one drunk with wondrous fervour of spirit, he threw aside, even his breeches, and stood up naked in the presence of all, saying unto his father: Hitherto I have called thee my father on earth, but henceforth I can confidently say 'Our Father, Which art in heaven,' with Whom I have laid up my whole treasure, and on Whom I have set my whole trust and hope." The Bishop, seeing this, and marvelling at such exceeding fervour in the man of God, rose forthwith, and, weeping, put his arms round him; then, devout and kindly man as he was, covered him with the cloak wherewith he himself was clad, bidding his servants give him something to clothe his limbs withal, and there was brought unto him a mean and rough tunic of a farm-servant of the Bishop. This Francis gladly received, and with his own hand marked it with the sign of the Cross, with a piece of chalk that he chanced upon, thus making it a garment meet for a man crucified, poor, and half naked. Thus, then, the servant of the Most High King was left despoiled, that he might follow the Lord Whom he loved. Who had been

despoiled and crucified; thus he was fortified with the Cross, that he might entrust his soul unto that wood of salvation, that should bring him forth unscathed from the shipwreck of the world.

5. Thereafter, this despiser of the world, loosed from the bonds of worldly desires, left the city, and, glad and free, sought an hidden solitude where he might hearken in loneliness and silence unto the hid treasures of the divine converse. And while the man of God, Francis, was making his way through a certain wood, chanting praises unto the Lord in the French tongue, and rejoicing, it chanced that some robbers rushed out on him from their hiding-places. With fierce mien they asked the man of God who he was, and he, full of confidence, gave a prophetic answer, saying : “I am a herald of the great King.” Then they fell upon him, and cast him into a ditch full of snow, crying: “Lie there, lout, thou herald of God” But he, on their departure, climbed out of the ditch, and, uplifted with exceeding gladness, with yet louder voice began to make the woods echo with praises unto the Creator of all.

6. When he came unto a neighbouring monastery, he asked an alms as a beggar, and received it as one unrecognised and despised. Departing thence, he came unto Gubbio, where he was recognised and entertained by a friend of former days, and was clad by him with a poor tunic, such as became the little poor one of Christ.

Thence that lover of utterest humility betook himself unto the lepers, and abode among them, with all diligence serving them all for the love of God. He would bathe their feet, and bind up their sores, drawing forth the corrupt matter from their wounds, and wiping away the blood; yea, in his marvellous devotion, he would even kiss their ulcerated wounds, he that was soon to be a Gospel physician. Wherefore he obtained from the Lord such power as that he received a marvellous efficacy in marvellously cleansing both soul and body from disease. I will relate one instance out of many, whereby the fame of the man of God was afterward bruited abroad.

A man in the county of Spoleto had his mouth and jaw eaten away by the ravages of a loathsome disease, and received no succour from any remedy of the physicians. It chanced that, after visiting the shrines of the holy

Apostles to implore their merits, he was returning from his pilgrimage, and met the servant of God. When out of devotion he was to kiss his footprints, Francis in his humility would not brook it, but kissed on the mouth him that had been fain to kiss his feet. Lo, as in his wondrous goodness the servant of the lepers, Francis, touched that loathsome sore with his holy lips, the disease utterly vanished, and the sick man at once regained his longed-for health. I know not which of these twain is the more rightly to be marvelled at, the depth of humility in such a gracious embrace, or the excellence of power in such an astounding miracle.

7. Francis, now stablished in the humility of Christ, recalled unto mind the obedience laid upon him by the Crucifix as to the repairing of the church of Saint Damian, and like one truly obedient returned unto Assisi, that he might, if even by begging, obtain means to accomplish the divine behest. Laying aside all shamefastness for the love of the Poor Man Crucified, he went about begging from those who had known him in his affluence, bearing the loads of stones on his frail body, worn with fasting. When the church aforesaid had been repaired, the Lord helping him, and the devotion of the citizens coming unto his aid,—that his body after its toil might not relax in sloth, he turned to repair the church of Saint Peter, at some distance from the city, by reason of the especial devotion that in the purity of his candid faith he had for the Prince of the Apostles.

8. When this church too was at length finished he came unto the place that is called The Little Portion, wherein a church had been reared in days of old in honour of the most Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, but which was then deserted and cared for by none. When the man of God beheld it thus abandoned, by reason of the ardent devotion that he had toward the Sovereign Lady of the world, he took up his abode there, that he might diligently labour to repair it. Perceiving that Angels oft times visited it,—according unto the name of that church, that from old time was called Saint Mary of the Angels,—he abode there by reason of his reverence for the Angels, and his especial love for the Mother of Christ. This place the holy man loved before all other places in the world; for here he began in humility, here he made progress in virtue, here he ended in happiness, and, dying, commended it unto the Brethren as a place most beloved of the

Virgin. Concerning this place a certain devout Brother, before his conversion, beheld a vision right worthy to be recounted. He beheld a countless host of men stricken with blindness, with their faces uplifted unto heaven, on bended knees, encircling this church, and they all, stretching out their hands on high, cried unto God with tears, beseeching His mercy and light. And lo, there came a great radiance from heaven, illumining all, and this gave light unto each one of them, and granted the longed-for salvation. This is the place wherein the Order of Brothers Minor was begun by Saint Francis according unto the impulse of the divine revelation. For at the bidding of the divine providence, by the which the servant of Christ was guided in all things, he built three material churches before that, instituting the Order, he preached the Gospel; thus not only did he make progress in ordered course from things perceived by the senses unto things perceived by the understanding, and from lesser things unto greater, but he did also prefigure in mystic wise by his material labours the work that should be wrought thereafter. For, like the thrice-repeated repairing of the material fabric, the Church, under the guidance of the holy man, was to be renewed in threefold wise, according unto the pattern given by him, and the Rule, and teaching of Christ; and a triple army of such as should be saved was to be triumphant, even as we now perceive to be fulfilled.

Chapter III

OF THE FOUNDING OF HIS RELIGION, AND SANCTION OF THE RULE

1. Now Francis, the servant of God, abiding at the church of the Virgin Mother of God, with continuous sighing besought her that had conceived the Word full of grace and truth that she would deign to become his advocate; and, by the merits of the Mother of Mercy, he did himself conceive and give birth unto the spirit of Gospel truth. For while on a day he was devoutly hearing the Mass of the Apostles, that Gospel was read aloud wherein Christ gave unto His disciples that were sent forth to preach the Gospel pattern for their life, to wit, that they should possess neither gold, nor silver, nor money in their purses, nor scrip for their journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves. Hearing this, and understanding it, and committing it unto memory, the lover of Apostolic poverty was at once filled with joy unspeakable. "This," saith he, "is what I desire, yea, this is what I long for with my whole heart." Forthwith he loosed his shoes from off his feet, laid down his staff, cast aside his purse and his money, contented him with one scanty tunic, and, throwing aside his belt, took a rope for girdle, applying all the care of his heart to discover how best he might fulfill that which he had heard, and conform himself in all things unto the rule of Apostolic godliness.

2. From this time forward, the man of God began, by divine impulse, to become a jealous imitator of Gospel poverty and to invite others unto penitence. His words were not empty, nor meet for laughter, but full of the might of the Holy Spirit, penetrating the heart's core, and smiting all that heard them with mighty amaze. In all his preaching, he would bring tidings

of peace, saying: “The Lord give you peace,” and thus he would greet the folk at the beginning of his discourses. This greeting he had learnt by revelation from the Lord, even as he himself did afterward testify. Whence it befell, according unto the prophet’s words, that he—himself inspired by the spirit of the prophets—brought tidings of peace, and preached salvation, and by salutary admonitions allied many unto the true peace who aforetime were at enmity with Christ, far from salvation.

3. Accordingly, as many remarked in the man of God alike the truth of his simple teaching and of his life, certain of them began by his ensample to turn their thoughts unto penitence, and, renouncing all, to join themselves unto him in habit and life. The first of these was that honour-worthy man, Bernard, who, being made a partaker in the divine calling, earned the title of the firstborn son of the blessed Father, both by being first in time, and by being of an especial holiness. For he, having proved the saintliness of the servant of Christ, was minded after his ensample to utterly despise the world, and sought counsel from him how he might accomplish this. Hearing this, the servant of God was filled with consolation by reason of his first offspring conceived of the Holy Spirit. “From God,” saith he, “behoveth us seek this counsel.” Forthwith, when it was morning, they entered into the church of Saint Nicholas, and, having first prayed, Francis, the worshipper of the Trinity, did thrice open the book of the Gospels, seeking by a threefold witness from God to strengthen the holy purpose of Bernard. In the first opening of the book was discovered that saying: “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor.” In the second: “Take nothing for your journey.” And in the third: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” “This,” saith the holy man, “is our life and Rule, and that of all that shall be minded to join our fellowship. Do thou go, then, if thou wilt be perfect, and fulfill that which thou hast heard.”

4. Not long after, five men were called by the same Spirit, and thus the sons of Francis numbered six; the third place among them fell unto the holy Father Giles, a man verily filled with God and worthy to be famed in remembrance. For he became afterward noted for the practice of lofty virtues, even as the servant of the Lord had foretold concerning him, and,

albeit he was ignorant and simple, he was exalted unto the peak of sublime contemplation. For while for a long space of time he was continuously absorbed in uplifting of the heart unto God, he was so often snatched up unto Him in ecstasies,—even as I myself beheld with the witness of mine own eyes,—that he might be deemed to live among men an angelic rather than a mortal life.

5. Moreover, about that same time, a certain priest of the city of Assisi, Silvester by name, a man of honourable life, received of the Lord a vision not to be passed over in silence. For since, in his finite judgment, he had looked askance at the manner of life of Francis and his Brethren, he was visited,—lest he should be imperiled by his rash verdict,—by the regard of the heavenly grace. For in a dream he beheld the whole city of Assisi beset by a great dragon, whose huge bulk seemed to threaten all the countryside with destruction. Then he saw a Cross of gold proceeding out of the mouth of Francis, the top whereof touched heaven, and its arms outstretched at the side seemed to reach unto the ends of the world, and at its glittering aspect that foul and loathly dragon was utterly put to flight. When this had been thrice shewn unto him, he deemed it a divine portent, and related it in order unto the man of God and his Brethren; and no long time thereafter he left the world, and clave so constantly unto the footsteps of Christ as that his life in the Order rendered true the vision that he had received while yet in the world.

6. When this vision was related unto him, the man of God was not puffed up with the glorying of men, but, recognising the goodness of God in the favours shewn unto him, he was the more keenly incited to repel the craft of the ancient enemy, and to preach the glory of the Cross of Christ. Now on a day, while in a certain lonely place he was bitterly bewailing the remembrance of past years, the joy of the Holy Spirit came upon him, and he was assured of the full remission of all his offences. Then, carried out of himself, and wholly wrapt into a marvellous light, the horizons of his mind were enlarged, and he clearly beheld the future story of himself and of his sons. Returning after this unto the Brethren, “Be consoled,” saith he, “my dearest, and rejoice in the Lord, and be not sad for that ye be few in number, nor let my simpleness nor your own make you afeared, for the Lord hath

verily shewn me that God will cause us to wax into a great host, and will enlarge us in manifold wise with the grace of His blessing.”

7. Whereas about this time another good man did enter the Religion, the blessed family of the man of God reached the number of seven. Then the holy Father called all his sons unto him and told them many things concerning the Kingdom of God, the contempt of the world, the sacrifice of their own wills and the chastisement of the body, and did lay before them his intent of sending them forth into the four quarters of the worlds For now the barren and poor humble simpleness of the holy Father had brought forth seven sons and he was fain to give birth unto the whole company of the faithful in the Lord Christ, calling them unto the mourning of penitence. “Go ye,” saith the sweet Father unto his sons, “bringing tidings of peace unto men, and preach repentance for the remission of sins. Be ye patient in tribulation, watchful unto prayer, zealous in toil, humble in speech, sober in manner, and thankful for kindnesses, seeing that for all these an everlasting kingdom is prepared for you.” Then they, humbly prostrating themselves on the ground before the servant of God, received with gladness of spirit the behest of holy obedience. And Francis said unto each one singly: “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” He was wont to say these words whensoever he was guiding any Brother unto obedience. Then he himself, knowing that he was set as an ensample unto the rest, that he might first do that which he had taught, set forth with one companion toward one quarter of the world, the remaining six being apportioned, after the fashion of a Cross, unto the other three parts. After some little time had passed, the kindly Father, longing for the presence of his beloved family,—since he could not of himself call them together into one place,—prayed that this might be accomplished by Him Who gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. And this came to pass. For, with no mortal summoning, and all unexpectedly, within a short time all came together according as he had desired, by the effectual working of the divine goodness, and to their no small marvel. Moreover, as four other honourable men joined them about that time, their number increased unto twelve.

8. Now when the servant of Christ perceived that the number of the Brethren was gradually increasing, he wrote for himself and for his

Brethren a Rule for their life, in simple words. Herein the observance of the Holy Gospel was set as the inseparable foundation, and some few other points were added that seemed necessary for a consistent manner of life. But he was fain that what he had written should be approved by the Supreme Pontiff, wherefore he purposed to approach the Apostolic See with that his company of simple men, relying only on the divine guidance. God from on high had regard unto his desire, and fortified the minds of his companions, that were afeared at the thought of his simpleness, by a vision shewn unto the man of God after this wise. It seemed unto him that he was walking along a certain road, near by which stood a very lofty tree. When he had drawn nigh unto it, and was standing beneath it, wondering at its height, on a sudden he was so raised on high by the divine might as that he touched the top of the tree, and bent down its highest branches unto its roots right easily. The portent of this vision Francis, filled with the Spirit of God, understood to refer unto the stooping of the Apostolic See unto his desire; wherefore he was gladdened in spirit, and his Brethren were strengthened in the Lord, and thus he set forth with them on the journey.

9. Now when he had come unto the Roman Curia, and had been introduced into the presence of the Supreme Pontiff, he expounded unto him his intent, humbly and earnestly beseeching him to sanction the Rule aforesaid for their life. And the Vicar of Christ, the lord Innocent the Third, a man exceeding renowned for wisdom, beholding in the man of God the wondrous purity of a simple soul, constancy unto his purpose, and the enkindled fervour of a holy will, was disposed to give unto the suppliant his fatherly sanction. Howbeit, he delayed to perform that which the little poor one of Christ asked, by reason that unto some of the Cardinals this seemed a thing untried, and too hard for human strength. But there was present among the Cardinals an honour-worthy man, the lord John of Saint Paul, Bishop of Sabina, a lover of all holiness, and an helper of the poor men of Christ. He, inflamed by the Divine Spirit, said unto the Supreme Pontiff, and unto his colleagues: "If we refuse the request of this poor man as a thing too hard, and untried, when his petition is that the pattern of Gospel life may be sanctioned for him, let us beware lest we stumble at the Gospel of Christ. For if any man saith that in the observance of Gospel perfection, and the vowing thereof, there is contained aught that is untried, or contrary

unto reason, or impossible to observe, he is clearly seen to blaspheme against Christ, the author of the Gospel.” When these arguments had been set forth, the successor of the Apostle Peter, turning unto the poor man of Christ, said: “Pray unto Christ, my son, that He may shew us His will through thee, and when we know it more surely, we will more confidently assent unto thy holy desires.”

10. Then the servant of God Almighty, betaking himself wholly unto prayer, gained by devout intercession that which he might set forth outwardly, and the Pope feel inwardly. For when he had narrated a parable of a rich King that had of free will espoused a fair woman that was poor, and how the children she bare shewed the likeness of the King that begat them, and so were brought up at his table, even as he had learnt this of the Lord,—he added, as an interpretation thereof: “It is not to be feared that the sons and heirs of the everlasting King will perish of hunger, even they that have been born of a poor mother in the likeness of the King, Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that shall themselves beget sons through the spirit of Poverty in a little poor Religion. For if the King of heaven hath promised an everlasting kingdom unto them that follow Him, how much more shall He provide for them those things that He bestoweth alike on the good and on the evil?” When the Vicar of Christ had diligently hearkened unto this parable, and the interpretation thereof, he marvelled greatly, and perceived that Christ had of a truth spoken through a man. Moreover, he maintained, by the inspiration of the Divine Spirit, that a vision that at that time was shewn unto him from heaven would be fulfilled in Francis. For in a dream he saw, as he recounted, the Lateran Basilica about to fall, when a little poor man, of mean stature and humble aspect, propped it with his own back, and thus saved it from falling. “Verily,” saith he, “he it is that by his work and teaching shall sustain the Church of Christ.” From this vision, he was filled with an especial devotion unto him, and in all ways disposed himself unto his supplication, and ever loved the servant of Christ with an especial affection. Then and there he granted his request, and promised at a later day to bestow yet more upon him. He sanctioned the Rule, and gave him a command to preach repentance, and made all the lay Brethren that had accompanied the servant of God wear narrow tonsures, that they might preach the word of God without hindrance.

Chapter IV

OF THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE ORDER UNDER HIS HAND, AND OF THE CONFIRMATION OF THE RULE ALREADY SANCTIONED

1. Thenceforward Francis, relying on the favour of heaven and on the Papal authority, took his way with all confidence toward the valley of Spoleto, that he might both live and teach the Gospel of Christ. While he was holding converse with his companions on the road, as to how they might observe in sincerity the Rule that they had professed, and how in all holiness and righteousness they might walk before God, how they might progress among themselves, and be an ensample unto others,—their discussion was prolonged, and the hours slipped by. And at last they found themselves, wearied with the length of their toilsome way, and an hungered, in a certain lonely place. Then verily, when there was no means whereby they might provide them with the needful food, the providence of God came speedily unto their aid. For, on a sudden, there appeared a man carrying bread in his hand, the which he gave unto the little poor ones of Christ, and, also on a sudden, vanished, without any man knowing whence he came or whither he went. Hereby the Brethren in their poverty perceived that the guardian care of heaven was about the company of the man of God, and were refreshed more by the gift of the divine bounty than by the food of the body; moreover, they were filled with heavenly comfort, and firmly resolved, and strengthened themselves in the irrevocable determination, never to retreat from their vow of holy poverty for any goad of necessity or affliction.

2. Thus they returned in their holy intent unto the valley of Spoleto, and began to discuss whether they ought to live among men, or to betake them unto lonely places. But Francis, the servant of Christ, trusting not in his own efforts or those of his Brethren, with importunate prayer enquired the pleasure of the divine will concerning this. Then he was illumined by a divinely revealed oracle, and understood that he had been sent of the Lord unto this end, that he might win for Christ the souls that the devil was striving to carry off. Wherefore he chose to live rather for all men than for his single self, inspired by the ensample of Him Who brooked to die, One Man for all.

3. Accordingly, the man of God returned with the rest of his companions unto a certain deserted hut nigh the city of Assisi, wherein, after the pattern of Holy Poverty, they lived in much toil and necessity, seeking to be refreshed rather with the bread of tears than of luxury. For they gave themselves up continuously unto divine prayers, being earnest in the practice of devout intercession—of the heart rather than of the lips—for they had not yet any ecclesiastical books wherein they might chant the Canonical Hours. Howbeit, in the place of such, they meditated day and night on the book of the Cross of Christ, continuously looking thereupon, by the ensample of their Father, and taught by his discourse, for he continually spake unto them concerning the Cross of Christ. When the Brethren besought him to teach them to pray, he said: “When ye pray, say ‘Our Father,’ and: ‘We adore Thee, O Christ, in all Thy churches that be in the whole world, and we bless Thee for that by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.’” Moreover, he taught them to praise God in all things and through all His creatures, to reverence priests with an especial honour, to firmly hold and simply confess the true faith, according as the Holy Roman Church doth both hold and teach it. The Brethren observed the instructions of the holy Father in all things, and, using the form of prayer that he had given unto them, would humbly prostrate themselves before all churches and crosses that they beheld, were it even from a distance.

4. Now while the Brethren were abiding in the place aforesaid, the holy man one Saturday entered the city of Assisi, to preach early on the Sunday, as was his wont, in the Cathedral Church. While the man devoted unto God

was passing the night, after his wonted manner, in a hut within the Canons' garden, praying unto God, and absent in the body from his sons,—lo, about midnight, while some of the Brethren were taking rest, others keeping vigil in prayer, a chariot of fire of marvellous brightness, entering by the door of the house, turned thrice hither and thither through the dwelling, and over the chariot a shining ball of fire rested, in appearance like unto the sun, making the night radiant. The watchful Brethren were astounded, they that slept were awakened and alarmed at the same moment, and felt the light no less in their hearts than with their bodies, while by the power of that marvellous brightness the conscience of each was laid bare unto his fellow. For they all understood alike,—all seeing in turn the hearts of each,—that their holy Father was absent from them in body, but present in spirit, and that, transformed into such a likeness, illumined with heavenly rays, and flaming with ardent heat, he was shewn unto them of the Lord with supernatural might in a shining chariot of fire; so that they, as Israelites indeed, might follow after him who, like another Elias, had been made by God the chariot and the horseman of spiritual men. We must verily believe that He opened the eyes of those simple men at the prayers of Francis, that they might see the mighty deeds of God, Who aforetime opened the eyes of the young man that he might see the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. When the holy man returned unto the Brethren, he began to scrutinise the secret things of their consciences, to console them with that marvellous vision, and to foretell many things that should come to pass concerning the progress of the Order. And as he revealed many things surpassing mortal sense, the Brethren perceived of a truth that the Spirit of the Lord had rested upon His servant Francis in such fulness as that they would walk most securely in following his teaching and life.

5. After this, Francis, shepherd of a little flock, led his band of twelve Brethren unto Saint Mary of the Little Portion,—the favour of heaven going before him,—that in the place wherein, by the merits of the Mother of God, the Order of Minors had taken its beginning, it might by her aid gain an increase. There too he became an herald of the Gospel, going round among cities and fortified places, proclaiming the Kingdom of God, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. He seemed unto them that beheld him a man of another world, one, to wit,

that had his heart ever set on heaven, and his face turned toward it, and that endeavoured to draw all men upwards. From this time, the vine of Christ began to bring forth pleasant savour of the Lord, and the flowers produced therefrom became the rich fruit of sweetness, honour, and righteousness.

6. For, enkindled by the fervour of his preaching, very many folk bound themselves by new rules of penitence, after the pattern received from the man of God, and that same servant of Christ ordained that their manner of living should be called the Order of the Brethren of Penitence. Of a truth, even as the way of penitence is known to be common unto all that strive after heaven, so it is noted of how much worth in the sight of God was this Order, embracing clerks and laymen, virgins, and married folk of either sex, by the many miracles wrought by some of its members. And there were maidens converted unto lifelong virginity, among whom that virgin dearest unto God, Clare, the first plant among them, like a snowy spring blossom breathed fragrance, and shone like a star exceeding bright. She is now glorified in heaven, and rightly honoured by the Church on earth, she that was the daughter in Christ of the holy Father Francis, the little poor one, and herself the Mother of the Poor Ladies.

7. Now many were not only smitten with devotion, but also kindled by yearning after the perfection of Christ, and, despising all the vanity of worldly things, followed in the footsteps of Francis; and these, increasing by daily additions, speedily reached unto the ends of the earth. For holy Poverty, whom alone they took with them for their charges, made them swift unto all obedience, strong to labour, and speedy in journeying. And since they possessed no earthly things they set their affections on naught, and had naught that they feared to lose; they were everywhere at ease, weighed down by no fear, harassed by no care; they lived like men who were removed from vexations of the mind, and, taking no thought for it, awaited the morrow, and their night's lodging. Many reproaches were hurled upon them in divers regions of the world, as on men contemptible and unknown; howbeit, their love for the Gospel of Christ rendered them so longsuffering as that they sought rather to be in places where they would endure persecution in the body, than in those where their saintliness was recognised, and where they might be puffed up by the applause of the

world. Their very destitution of possessions seemed unto them overflowing wealth, while, according unto the counsel of the Wise King, they were better pleased with little than with much.

On a time when some of the Brethren had come unto the regions of the infidels, it chanced that a certain Saracen, moved by kindly feeling, offered them money for their needful food. And when they refused to take it, the man marvelled, perceiving that they were penniless. But when at last he understood that they had become poor for the love of God and were resolved not to own money, he associated himself with them in such affection as that he offered to supply all their needs, so long as he should have aught in his possession. O priceless value of poverty, by whose marvellous power the mind of a fierce barbarian was changed into such compassionate gentleness! How appalling and scandalous a crime it is, that any Christian should trample on this rare pearl, that a Saracen exalted with such honour!

8. About that time, a certain Religious of the Order of Crossbearers, Morico by name, was lying in an hospital hard by Assisi suffering from an infirmity so serious and so protracted as that he was given up unto death by the physicians; he became a suppliant of the man of God, beseeching him earnestly through a messenger that he would deign to intercede with the Lord on his behalf. The blessed Father graciously acceded thereunto, and, having first prayed, took some crumbs of bread, and mixed with them some oil taken from the lamp that burned before the altar of the Virgin, and sent it by the hand of the Brethren unto the sick man, as though it were an electuary, saying: "Carry this medicament unto our brother Morico, by the which the power of Christ shall not only restore him unto full health, but shall also render him an hardy warrior, who shall cleave with constancy unto our ranks." Forthwith, so soon as the sick man tasted of that remedy made by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he rose up healed, and gained from God such strength of mind and body as that shortly thereafter he entered the Religion of the holy man, and, clothing himself with one tunic alone—beneath the which he wore for a long space of time a shirt of mail—and satisfied with but uncooked fare,—herbs to wit, and vegetables and fruits,—

he thus for many years tasted neither bread nor wine, and yet remained strong and sound.

9. As the merits of the virtues of these little ones of Christ waxed greater, the fragrance of their good repute was spread on all sides, and drew much folk from divers parts of the world to see the holy Father in person. Among whom was a certain skilled composer of secular songs, who by reason of this gift had been crowned by the Emperor, and thence called “King of Verse,” and he now was minded to seek the man of God, the despiser of worldly things. And when he had found him preaching in a Monastery at Borgo San Severino, the hand of the Lord was upon him, and he beheld that same preacher of the Cross of Christ, Francis, marked after the likeness of a Cross with two exceeding shining swords set crosswise, whereof the one reached from his head unto his feet, the other across his breast from hand to hand. He had not known the servant of Christ by face, but speedily recognised him when signalled out by so great a portent. Forthwith, all astonished at this sight, he began to resolve on better things, and, at length, pricked by the power of his words, and pierced as though by the sword of the Spirit proceeding out of his mouth, he did utterly despise worldly glories, and clave unto the blessed Father, professing his vows. Wherefore the holy num, seeing that he had utterly turned from the disquiet of the world unto the peace of Christ, called him Brother Pacifico. He afterward made progress in all holiness, and, before that he became Minister in France,—being the first who held the office of Minister there,—he merited to behold once more a great T on the forehead of Francis, the which, marked out by a diversity of colours, adorned his face with its marvellous beauty. This sign, in sooth, the holy man revered with deep affection, praised it often in his discourse, and, in the letters that he dictated, signed it with his own hand at the end, as though all his care was, in the prophet’s words, to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry, and that be truly converted unto Christ Jesus.

10. Now as time went by, and the Brethren were multiplied, their watchful shepherd began to call them together unto Chapters General in the place of Saint Mary of the Little Portion, so that, God dividing them an inheritance by line in the land of poverty, he might allot unto each his portion of

obedience. Here, albeit there was destitution of all things needful, a company of more than 5,000 Brethren came together at one time, and, the divine mercy succouring them, there was both a sufficiency of victual, and bodily health together with it, while gladness of spirit abounded. In the provincial Chapters, albeit Francis could not there shew himself present in the body, yet in spirit—by his zealous care for their ruling, by his urgency in prayer, and the efficacy of his blessing—he was present there; yea, and once, by the operation of God’s marvellous power, he did visibly appear. For while that glorious preacher, who is now a noted Confessor of Christ, Antony, was preaching unto the Chapter of the Brethren at Arles on the title inscribed on the Cross: “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,” a certain Brother of proved uprightness, Monaldo by name, looking, by a divine impulse, toward the door of the Chapter-house, beheld with his bodily eyes the Blessed Francis uplifted in the air, his hands outstretched after the manner of a Cross, blessing the Brethren. All the Brethren felt that they had been filled with a consolation of spirit so great and so new as that the Spirit bore indubitable witness within them of the true presence of the holy Father, albeit this was further assured, not alone by manifest tokens, but also by external testimony through the words of that same holy Father. We must verily believe that the almighty power of God,—that vouchsafed unto the holy Bishop Ambrose to be present at the burial of the glorious Martin, that he might honour the holy Pontiff with his holy ministry,—did also make His servant Francis to appear at the preaching of His true herald Antony, that he might sanction his preaching of the truth, and in especial his preaching of the Cross of Christ, whereof he was a supporter and servant.

11. Now as the Order was spreading abroad, Francis was minded to make the Rule of their life, that the lord Innocent had sanctioned, be confirmed in perpetuity by his successor Honorius, and he was admonished by a revelation from God on this wise. He seemed unto himself to have gathered from the ground some very small crumbs of bread, and to have to part them among many famished Brethren that stood round about him. While he hesitated, fearing to part among them such minute crumbs, lest haply they might slip between his hands, a Voice from above said unto him: “Francis, make one Host out of all the crumbs, and give it unto these that would fain eat.” This he did, and such as did not receive it devoutly, or despised the

gift as they received it, were speedily stricken with leprosy, and so marked out from the rest. At morn, the holy man narrated all these things unto his companions, grieving that he could not interpret the mystic meaning of the vision. But on the day following, as he kept prayerful vigil, he heard a Voice speaking unto him from heaven on this wise: “Francis, the crumbs of the night past are the words of the Gospel, the Host is the Rule, the leprosy is sin.” Being fain, therefore, to reduce unto more convenient form the Rule that was to be confirmed,—it having been somewhat diffusely compiled by putting together the words of the Gospel,—and being directed thereunto by the vision that had been shewn him, he went up into a certain mountain with two companions, the Holy Spirit leading him. There, fasting, or living on bread and water alone, he made the Rule be compiled, according unto what the divine Spirit had taught him in prayer. When he came down from the mountain, he entrusted this Rule unto the keeping of his Vicar, who, when a few days had gone by, affirmed that he had lost it through negligence. Then the holy man returned unto the lonely place, and there drew up the Rule again, like the former one, as though he had received the very words from the mouth of God; and he obtained its confirmation, as he had desired, from the lord Pope Honorius aforesaid, in the eighth year of his pontificate. When persuading the Brethren with ardour to observe this Rule, he would say that he had set naught therein of his own devising, but that he had made all things be written according as they had been divinely revealed unto him. And that this might be more assuredly confirmed by the witness of God, it was but a few days thereafter that the stigmata of the Lord Jesus were imprinted upon him by the finger of the Living God,—the seal, as it were, of the Chief Pontiff, Christ, to sanction in all ways the Rule, and to approve its author, even as is described in its own place below, after the recital of his virtues.

Chapter V

OF THE AUSTERITY OF HIS LIFE, AND OF HOW ALL CREATED THINGS AFFORDED HIM COMFORT

1. When therefore the man of God, Francis, perceived that by his ensample many were incited to bear the Cross of Christ with fervour of soul, he himself was incited, like a good leader of the army of Christ, to reach unto the palm of victory by the heights of unconquered valour. For, considering that saying of the Apostle: “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts,” and being fain to wear the armour of the Cross upon his body, he restrained his sensual appetites with such strict discipline as that he would barely take what was necessary to support life. For he was wont to say that it was difficult to satisfy the needs of the body without yielding unto the inclinations of the senses. Wherefore he would hardly, and but seldom, allow himself cooked food when in health, and, when he did allow it, he would either sprinkle it with ashes, or by pouring water thereupon would as far as possible destroy its savour and taste. Of his drinking of wine what shall I say, when even of water he would scarce drink what he needed, while parched with burning thirst? He was always discovering methods of more rigorous abstinence, and would daily make progress in their use, and albeit he had already attained the summit of perfection, yet, like a novice, he was ever making trial of some new method, chastising the lusts of the flesh by afflicting it. Howbeit, when he went forth abroad, he adapted himself,—as the Gospel biddeth,—unto them that entertained him, in the quality of their meats, yet only so as that, on his return unto his own abode, he strictly observed the sparing frugality of

abstinence. In this wise he shewed himself harsh toward his own self, gracious toward his neighbour, and in all things subject unto the Gospel of Christ, and did thus set an ensample of edification, not alone by his abstinence, but even in what he ate. The bare ground for the most part served as a couch unto his wearied body, and he would often sleep sitting, with a log or a stone placed under his head, and, clad in one poor tunic, he served the Lord in cold and nakedness.

2. Once when he was asked how in such scant clothing he could protect him from the bitterness of the winter's cold, he made answer in fervour of spirit: "If through our yearning for the heavenly fatherland we have been inwardly kindled by its flame, we can easily endure this bodily cold." He abhorred softness in clothing, and loved harshness, declaring that for this John the Baptist had been praised by the Divine lips. In sooth, if ever he perceived smoothness in a tunic that was given him, he had it lined with small cords, for he would say that, according unto the Word of Truth, it was not in poor men's huts, but in Kings' houses, that softness of raiment was to be sought. And he had learnt by sure experience that the devils be afeared of hardness, but that by luxury and softness they be the more keenly incited to tempt men.

Accordingly, one night when by reason of an infirmity in his head and eyes he had, contrary unto his wont, a pillow of feathers placed beneath his head, the devil entered thereinto, and vexed him until the morning hour, distracting him in divers ways from his exercise of holy prayer; until, calling his companion, he made the pillow and the devil withal be carried afar from the cell. But as the Brother was leaving the cell, carrying the pillow, he lost the power and use of all his limbs, until, at the voice of the holy Father, who perceived this in spirit, his former powers of mind and body were fully restored unto him.

3. Stern in discipline, Francis stood continually upon the watch-tower, having especial care unto that purity that should be maintained in both the inner and the outer man. Wherefore, in the early days of his conversion, he was wont in the winter season to plunge into a ditch full of snow, that he might both utterly subdue the foe within him, and might preserve his white robe of chastity from the fire of lust. He would maintain that it was beyond

compare more tolerable for a spiritual man to bear intense cold in his body, than to feel the heat of carnal lust, were it but a little, in his mind.

4. When he was at the hermitage of Sartiano, and had one night devoted himself unto prayer in his cell, the ancient enemy called him, saying thrice : “ Francis, Francis, Francis.” When he had enquired of him what he sought, that other made reply to deceive him: “There is no sinner in the world whom God would not spare, should he turn unto Him. But whoso killeth himself by harsh penance, shall find no mercy throughout eternity.” Forthwith the man of God perceived by revelation the deceits of the enemy, and how he had striven to render him once more lukewarm. And this the following event proved. For but a little after this, at the instigation of him whose breath kindleth coals, a grievous temptation of the flesh laid hold on him. When the lover of chastity felt its oncoming, he laid aside his habit, and began to scourge himself severely with a cord, saying: “Ah, brother ass, thus must thou be led, thus must thou submit unto the lash. The habit is the servant of Religion, it is a token of holiness, the sensual man may not steal it; if thou art fain to go forth anywhither, go!” Then, impelled by a marvellous fervour of spirit, he threw open the door of his cell, and went out into the garden, where, plunging his now naked body into a great snow-heap, he began to pile up there from with full hands seven mounds, the which he set before him, and thus addressed his outer man: “Behold, (saith he), this larger heap is thy wife, these four be two sons and two daughters, the other twain be a serving man and maid, that thou must needs have to serve thee. Now bestir thee and clothe them, for they be perishing with cold. But if manifold cares on their behalf trouble thee, do thou be careful to serve the one Lord.” Then the tempter departed, routed, and the holy man returned unto his cell victorious, in that, by enduring the external cold in right penitent fashion, he had so extinguished the fire of lust within that thereafter he felt it no whit. Now a Brother, who at the time was devoting himself unto prayer, beheld all these things by the light of a clear shining moon. When the man of God discovered that he had seen these things on that night, he revealed unto him how that temptation had befallen him, and bade him tell no man, so long as he himself lived, the thing that he had seen.

5. And not only did he teach that the appetites of the body must be mortified, and its impulses bridled, but also that the outer senses, through the which death entereth into the soul, must be guarded with the utmost watchfulness. He bade that intimate intercourse with women, holding converse with them, and looking upon them—the which be unto many an occasion of falling—should be zealously shunned, declaring that by such things a weak spirit is broken, and a strong one oftentimes weakened. He said that one who held converse with women—unless he were of an especial uprightness—could as little avoid contamination therefrom as he could, in the words of Scripture, go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned. He himself so turned away his eyes that they might not behold vanity after this sort that he knew the features of scarce any woman,—thus he once told a companion. For he thought it was not safe to dwell on the appearance of their persons, that might either rekindle a spark of the vanquished flesh, or spot the radiance of a chaste mind. For he maintained that converse with women was a vain toy, except only for confession or the briefest instruction, such as made for salvation, and was in accord with decorum. “What dealings,” saith he, “should a Religious have with a woman, except when she seeketh, with devout supplication, after holy penitence, or counsel anent a better life? In overweening confidence, the enemy is less dreaded, and the devil, if so be that he can have a hair of his own in a man, soon maketh it wax into a beam.”

6. He taught the Brothers zealously to shun sloth, as the sink of all evil thoughts, shewing by his ensample that the rebellious and idle body must be subdued by unceasing discipline and profitable toil. Wherefore he would call his body “brother ass,” as though it were meet to be loaded with toilsome burdens, beaten with many stripes, and nourished on mean fare. If he beheld any man wandering about in idleness, and fain to feed on the toil of others, he thought he ought to be called “brother fly,” for that, doing no good himself, and spoiling the good done by others, he made himself an hateful pest unto all. Wherefore he oftentimes said: “ I would that my Brethren should labour and employ themselves, lest, being given up unto sloth, they should stray into sins of heart or tongue.” He was minded that a Gospel silence should be observed by the Brethren, such as, to wit, that they should at all times diligently refrain from every idle word, as those that

shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgement. But if he found any Brother prone unto vain words, he would sharply chide him, declaring a shamefast sparingness of speech to be the guard of a pure heart, and no small virtue, seeing that death and life are in the power of the tongue, not so much with regard unto taste as with regard unto speech.

7. But albeit he sought with all his might to lead the Brethren unto the austere life, yet the utmost rigour of severity pleased him not,—such rigour as hath no bowels of compassion, nor is flavoured with the salt of discretion. Thus, on a certain night, when one of the Brethren by reason of his excessive abstinence was so tormented by hunger that he could take no repose, the kindly shepherd, perceiving the danger that threatened his sheep, called the Brother, set bread before him, and, that he might remove any cause for his confusion of face, began first to eat himself, then gently bade him partake. The Brother, laying aside his shamefastness, took the food, rejoicing exceedingly that, through the wise kindliness of his shepherd, he had both escaped that bodily peril, and had received no small ensample of edification withal. When morning came, and the Brethren had been called together, the man of God related that which had befallen in the night, adding the sage exhortation: “Be the act of love, not the food, an ensample unto you, my Brethren.” Moreover, he taught them to follow discretion, as the charioteer of the virtues,—not that discretion unto which the flesh persuadeth, but that which Christ taught, Whose most holy life is acknowledged to be the express image of perfection.

8. And since it is not possible for a man beset with the infirmity of the flesh so perfectly to follow the Crucified Lamb without spot as to escape contracting some defilement, by his own firm ensample he made declaration that they who keep watch over the perfection of their life ought to cleanse themselves daily with floods of tears. For, albeit he had already attained a wondrous purity of heart and body, yet would he not abstain from continual floods of tears whereby to cleanse the mental vision, not weighing the detriment unto his bodily sight. For when by incessant weeping he had sustained a very grievous injury unto the eyes, and the physician would fain have persuaded him to refrain from tears, if he wished to escape blindness of his bodily sight, the holy man made answer: “It is not meet, brother

physician, that for the love of that light that we have in common with the flies, the visitation of the eternal light should be impaired, be it but by little. For the spirit did not receive the blessing of light for the sake of the flesh, but the flesh for the sake of the spirit.” He preferred rather to lose the light of his bodily vision than, by thwarting the devotion of the spirit, to check the tears whereby the inner eye is cleansed, that it may avail to see God.

9. Now on a time when he was counselled by the physicians, and urgently importuned by the Brethren, to permit himself to be succoured by the remedy of a cautery, the man of God did humbly assent thereunto, forasmuch as he perceived it to be alike salutary and arduous. The surgeon, then, was summoned, and, having come, laid his iron instrument in the fire to prepare for the cautery. Then the servant of Christ,—consoling his body that at the sight shuddered in fear,—began to address the fire as a friend, saying: “My brother fire, the Most High hath created thee beyond all other creatures mighty in thine enviable glory, fair, and useful. Be thou clement unto me in this hour, and courteous. I beseech the great Lord, Who created thee, that He temper thy heat unto me, so that I may be able to bear thy gentle burning.” His prayer ended, he made the sign of the Cross over the iron instrument, that was glowing at white heat from the fire, and then waited fearlessly. The hissing iron was impressed on the tender flesh, and the cautery drawn from the ear unto the eyebrow. How much suffering the fire caused him, the holy man himself told: “Praise the Most High,” saith he unto the Brethren, “for that of a truth I say unto you, I felt neither the heat of the fire, nor any pain in my flesh.” And, turning unto the surgeon, “If,” saith he, “the cautery be not well made, impress it again.” The surgeon, finding such mighty valour of spirit in his frail body, marvelled, and exalted this divine miracle, saying: “I tell ye, Brethren, I have seen strange things to-day.” For, by reason that Francis had attained unto such purity that his flesh was in harmony with his spirit, and his spirit with God, in marvellous agreement, it was ordained by the divine ruling that the creature that serveth its Maker should be wondrously subject unto his will and command.

10. At another time, when the servant of God was afflicted by a very grievous sickness, at the hermitage of Saint Urban, and, feeling his strength failing, had asked for a draught of wine, answer was made him that there

was no wine there that could be brought unto him; whereupon he bade that water should be brought, and, when brought, he blessed it, making the sign of the Cross over it. At once that which had been pure water became excellent wine, and that which the poverty of the lonely place could not provide was obtained by the purity of the holy man. Tasting thereof, he forthwith so easily recovered his strength as that the new flavour and the renewed health, by the sense of taste and by the miracle renewing him that tasted, attested, with twofold witness, his perfect laying aside of the old man and putting on of the new.

11. Nor did created things alone obey the servant of God at his beck, but everywhere the very providence of the Creator stooped unto his good pleasure. Thus, on a time when his body was weighed down by the suffering of many infirmities together, he had a yearning for some tuneful sound that might incite him unto gladness of spirit, yet discreet decorum would not allow this to be rendered by human agency,—then the Angels gave their services to fulfil the good pleasure of the holy man. For one night while he was wakeful, and meditating on the Lord, on a sudden was heard the sound of a lyre of wondrous harmony and sweetest tune. No one was to be seen, but the coming and going of a lyrist was betokened by the volume of sound, now here, now there. With his mind uplifted unto God, he enjoyed such sweetness from that melodious strain as that he thought him to have exchanged this world for another. This was not hidden from the Brethren that were his close companions, who oft-times perceived, by assured tokens, that he was visited of the Lord with such exceeding and continual consolations as that he could not utterly hide them.

12. On another time, while the man of God, with a Brother for companion, was making his way to preach between Lombardy and the March of Treviso, and was nigh the Po, the shadowy darkness of night surprised them. And since their way was beset by many and great dangers by reason of the darkness, the river, and the marshes, his companion said unto the holy man: “Pray, Father, that we be delivered from instant peril.” Unto whom the man of God made answer with great confidence: “God is able, if it be His sweet will, to put to flight the thick darkness, and to grant us the blessing of light.” Scarce had he ended his speech ere, lo! such a great light

began to shine around them with heavenly radiance that, while for others it was dark night, they could see in the clear light not their road only, but many things round about. By the leading of this light they were guided in body and consoled in spirit, until they arrived safely, singing divine hymns and lauds, at their place of lodging that was some long way distant. Consider how wondrous was the purity of this man, how great his merits, that at his beck the fire should temper its heat, water should change its flavour, angelic music should afford him solace, and light from heaven leading; thus it was evident that the whole frame of the world was obedient unto the consecrated senses of the holy man.

Chapter VI

OF HIS HUMILITY AND OBEDIENCE AND OF THE DIVINE CONDESCENSIONS SHEWN UNTO HIM AT WILL

1. Humility, the guardian and glory of all virtues, abounded in rich fulness in the man of God. In his own estimation, he was naught but a sinner, whereas in very truth he was the mirror and brightness of all saintliness. In humility he strove to build himself up, as a wise masterbuilder laying the foundation that he had learnt of Christ. He would say that for this end the Son of God had come down from the heights, and from His Father's bosom, unto our mean estate, to wit, that both by ensample and precept our Lord and Master might teach humility. Wherefore Francis, as a disciple of Christ, strove ever to make himself of no esteem in his own and other men's eyes, mindful of that saying of the greatest Teacher: "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." This too he was wont to say, "A man's worth is what he is in the sight of God, and no more." Accordingly, he deemed it a fool's part to be uplifted by the applause of the world, but he rejoiced in railings, and was saddened by praise. He would liefer hear himself reviled than praised, knowing that reviling leadeth unto amendment, while praise impelleth toward a fall. Wherefore oftentimes when folk exalted the merits of his saintliness, he would bid one of the Brethren offer him a contrast, by pouring contemptuous words into his ears. And when that Brother, albeit against his will, called him a lout and an hireling, one unskilled and unprofitable, he would rejoice in spirit and in countenance alike, and would make answer:

“The Lord bless thee, dearest son, for thou hast spoken words most true, and such as it becometh the son of Peter Bernardone to hear.”

2. Now that he might make himself contemned of others, he spared not his shamefastness, but in preaching before the whole folk laid bare his failings. It befell once that, while weighed down by sickness, he had some little relaxed the strictness of his abstinence, with the intent of regaining his health. But when that he had recovered his bodily strength, this true despiser of self was inspired to rebuke his own flesh. “It is not fitting,” saith he, “that the folk should believe me to observe abstinence while that I, on the contrary, do refresh my body in secret.” Accordingly, he arose, kindled with the spirit of holy humility, and, calling the folk together in an open space of the city of Assisi, he, together with many Brethren that he had brought with him, made a solemn entrance into the Cathedral Church, and then, with a rope tied round his neck, and naked save for his breeches, bade them drag him in the sight of all unto the stone whereupon criminals were wont to be set for punishment. Mounting it, albeit he was suffering from quartan fever and weakness, and the season was bitterly cold, he preached with much power of spirit, and, while all gave ear, declared that he ought not to be honoured as a spiritual man, but that rather he ought to be despised of all as a fleshly glutton. Then they that were present and beheld this amazing sight, marvelled, and, for that they had long known his austerities, were devoutly pricked to the heart, exclaiming that humility after this sort were easier admired than imitated. Yet, albeit this seemed rather like unto the prodigy foretold of the prophet than an ensample, it set forth a pattern of perfect humility, whereby the follower of Christ was taught that he ought to despise the vaunting of a transient praise, and restrain the pomp of swelling pride, and refute the lies of a deceitful semblance.

3. Many things after this sort he oftentimes did, that outwardly he might become as it were a vessel that perisheth, while inwardly he possessed the spirit of sanctification. He sought to hide in the secret places of his heart the favours of his Lord, loth to reveal them and so gain praise, that might be an occasion of falling. Oftentimes, when he was glorified of many, he would speak after this wise: “I may yet have sons and daughters, praise me not as

one that is safe. No man should be praised before that his end be known.” This unto them that praised him, unto himself this: “Had the Most High shewn such favours unto a robber, he would have been better pleasing than thou, Francis.” Ofttimes he would say unto the Brethren: “Concerning all that a sinner can do, none aught to flatter himself with undeserved praise. A sinner, (he saith), can fast, pray, lament, and mortify his own body,—this one thing he cannot do, to wit, be faithful unto his Lord. In this, then, we may glory, if we render unto the Lord the glory that is His due, and if, while serving him faithfully, we ascribe unto Him whatsoever He giveth.”

4. Now this Gospel merchant,—that he might in many ways make profit, and make the whole time that now is be turned into merit,—was fain not so much to be set in authority as to be set under authority, not so much to command as to obey. Wherefore, giving up his office unto the Minister General, he sought a Warden, unto whose will he might submit him in all things. For he maintained that the fruit of holy obedience was so rich as that they who placed their necks under her yoke spent no portion of their time without profit; wherefore he was ever wont to promise and to render obedience unto the Brother that was his companion. He said once unto his companions: “Among other gifts that the divine goodness hath deigned to bestow upon me, it hath conferred this grace, that I would as heedfully obey the novice of an hour, were he appointed unto me for Warden, as I would the oldest and wisest Brother. The subordinate, (saith he), ought to regard him that is set in authority over him not as a man, but as Him for love of Whom he doth make himself subject. And the more despicable is he that commandeth, the more acceptable is the humility of him that obeyeth.”

When once it was enquired of him what man should be esteemed truly obedient, he set before them as an ensample the similitude of a dead body. “Lift up,” saith he, “a dead body, and place it where thou wilt. Thou shalt see it will not murmur at being moved, it will not complain of where it is set, it will not cry out if left there. If it be set in a lofty seat, it will look not up, but down. If it be clad in purple, it but redoubleth its pallor. This, (saith he), is the truly obedient man, who reasoneth not why he is moved, who careth not where he be placed, who urgeth not that he should be transferred;

who, when set in authority, preserveth his wonted humility, and the more he is honoured, considereth himself the more unworthy.”

5. He said once unto his companion: “I esteem not myself to be a Brother Minor unless I be in the state that I shall describe unto thee. Lo now, I suppose me to be one set in authority over the Brethren; I go unto the Chapter, I preach unto the Brethren and exhort them, and at the end they speak against me, saying: “Thou mislikest us, for that thou art unlettered, slow of speech, a fool, and simple,” and thus I am cast forth with reviling, little esteemed of all. I tell thee,—unless I can hear such words with unchanged countenance, with unchanged gladness of spirit and unchanged holy intent,—I am vainly called a Brother Minor.” And he added, “In exalted place there is the fear of fall, in praises a precipice, in the humility of a submissive spirit there is profit. Why then do we look for perils rather than profits, when we have had time bestowed on us that we may make profit therein?”

From this same reason of humility, Francis was minded that his Brethren should be called by the name of Minors, and that the rulers of his Order should be called Ministers, that thus he might employ the very words of the Gospel that he had vowed to observe, and that his followers might learn from their very name that they had come to learn humility in the school of the humble Christ. For that Teacher of humility, Christ Jesus, when He would teach His disciples what was perfect humility, said: “Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.”

When therefore the lord Bishop of Ostia, the protector and chief helper of the Order of Brothers Minor, (he that afterward, as the holy man had foretold, was raised unto the dignity of the Supreme Pontificate, under the name of Gregory the Ninth), enquired of him whether it would be his will for his Brethren to be promoted unto high places in the Church, he made answer: “Lord, my Brethren be called Minors with this very intent, that they may not arrogate unto themselves to be called greater. If thou art fain, (saith he), that they should bear fruit in the Church of God, maintain and keep them in the state of their calling, and in no wise suffer them to rise unto rulership in the Church.”

6. Now since in himself as well as in them that obey he set humility before all honours, God, Who loveth the humble, deemed him worthy of loftier heights, as a vision sent from heaven made evident unto a Brother that was of an especial holiness and devoutness. For he had been in the company of the man of God, and, together with him, had been praying with fervour of spirit in a certain deserted church, when, falling into an ecstasy, he beheld among many seats in heaven one that was more honourable than the rest, adorned with precious stones, and shining with utmost splendour. Marvelling within himself at the splendour of this exalted throne, he began to consider with anxious thought who should be deemed worthy to sit thereon. Then, as he considered, he heard a voice saying unto him: "This seat pertained unto one of the fallen Angels, and is now kept for the humble Francis." At length, when the Brother had come back unto himself from that trance of prayer, he followed the holy man as he went forth, as was his wont. And as they walked by the way, conversing of God each in turn, that Brother, not unmindful of his vision, enquired of him discreetly what he thought of himself. And the humble servant of Christ I answered him: "I think myself the chief of sinners." When the Brother said in opposition that he could not, with a sound conscience, say or feel this, Francis added: "If any man, howsoever guilty, had received such mercy from Christ as I, I verily think he would have been far more acceptable unto God than I." Then, by the hearing of such marvellous humility, the Brother was assured of the truth of the vision that had been shewn him, knowing by the witness of the Holy Gospel that the truly humble shall be exalted unto that excellent glory wherefrom the proud is cast down.

7. On another time, when that he was praying in a deserted church in the province of Massa, nigh Monte Casale, he learnt through the Spirit that certain holy relics had been deposited there. Perceiving with sorrow that for a long time past they had been deprived of the reverence due unto them, he bade the Brethren bring them unto the place, with all honour. But when, need arising, he had departed from them, his sons were forgetful of their Father's behest, and neglected the merit of obedience. Then on a day, when they were fain to celebrate the holy mysteries, and the upper covering of the altar was removed, they found, not without amazement, some bones right fair and fragrant, beholding the relics that the power of God, not men's

hands, had brought thither. Returning shortly after, the man devoted unto God began to make diligent enquiry whether his behest concerning the relics had been carried out. The Brethren humbly confessed their sin of neglected obedience, and gained pardon, with an award of penance. And the holy man said: "Blessed be the Lord my God, Who Himself hath fulfilled that which ye ought to have done." Consider heedfully the care of the divine providence for our dust, and weigh the goodness of the humble Francis, that did excel in the sight of God. For when man obeyed not his bidding, God fulfilled his desires.

8. Coming on a time unto Imola, he approached the Bishop of the city, and humbly besought him that, with his sanction, he might call the people together to preach unto them. The Bishop answered him harshly, saying: "It sufficeth, Brother, that I myself preach unto my people." Francis, in his true humility, bowed his head, and went forth; howbeit, after a short space, he returned into the house. When the Bishop, as one in wrath, asked of him what he meant by coming again, he replied, with humility alike of heart and voice, "Lord, if a father drive his son forth by one door, he must enter again by another." Vanquished by his humility, the Bishop embraced him with eager mien, saying: "Thou and all thy Brethren shall from henceforward have a general license to preach throughout my diocese, for this thy holy humility hath earned."

9. It befell once that he came unto Arezzo at a time when the whole city was shaken by a civil war that threatened its speedy ruin. As he was lodging in the outskirts of the city, he beheld the demons exulting above it, and inflaming the angry citizens unto mutual slaughter. Then, that he might put to flight those powers of the air that were stirring up the strife, he sent forward as his herald Brother Silvester, a man of dovelike simplicity, saying: "Go out before the city gate, and, on behalf of God Almighty, command the demons in the power of obedience to depart with all speed." The Brother, in his true obedience, hastened to perform his Father's behests, and, coming before the presence of the Lord with thanksgiving, began to cry with a loud voice before the city gate: "On behalf of God Almighty, and at the bidding of His servant Francis, depart far from hence, all ye demons!" At once the city was restored unto a state of peace, and all the citizens

peacefully and quietly began to fashion anew their civil laws. Thus when the raging arrogance of the demons had been driven out, that had held the city as it were in a state of siege, the wisdom of the poor, to wit, the humility of Francis, came unto its aid, and restored peace, and saved the city. For by the merit of the difficult virtue of humble obedience, he obtained so powerful an authority over those rebellious and insolent spirits as that he could restrain their fierce arrogance, and put to flight their lawless molestation.

10. The proud demons flee before the lofty virtues of the humble, save when at times the divine mercy permitteth them to buffet them that humility may be preserved, even as the Apostle Paul writeth concerning himself, and as Francis learnt by experience. For when the lord Cardinal of Sta. Croce, Leo, did invite him to tarry for a while with him in Rome, he humbly agreed thereunto, for the reverence and love that he bore him. When on the first night, his prayers ended, he was fain to sleep, the demons rose up against the soldier of Christ, cruelly attacking him, and, when they had beaten him long and sorely, at the last left him as it were half dead. On their departure, the man of God called his companion, and when he came, related unto him the whole affair, adding: “I believe, Brother, that the demons, who can avail naught save in so far as the divine providence permitteth them, have now assailed me thus furiously because that my lodging in the palaces of the great affordeth no good ensample. My Brethren that sojourn in poor little abodes, when they hear that I lodge with Cardinals, will perchance surmise that I am being entangled in worldly affairs, that I am carried away by honours paid me, and that I am abounding in luxuries. Wherefore I deem it better that he who is set for an ensample should shun palaces, and should walk humbly among the humble in humble abodes, that he may make those that bear poverty strong, by himself bearing the like.” At morn, then, they came and, humbly excusing themselves, took farewell of the Cardinal.

11. The holy man did in truth loathe pride—the root of all evils,—and disobedience, its most evil offspring, yet none the less he would alway receive the humility of the penitent. It befell once that a certain Brother was brought unto him who had transgressed against the rule of obedience, and deserved correction by a just discipline. But the man of God, perceiving by

manifest tokens that that Brother was truly contrite, was moved by his love of humility to spare him. Howbeit, that the easiness of gaining pardon should not be a pretext unto others for wrongdoing, he bade that his hood should be taken from that Brother, and cast into the midst of the flames, that all might take note by what grave punishment sins of disobedience were to be chastised. When the hood had lain for some time in the midst of the fire, he bade that it should be withdrawn from the flames, and restored unto the Brother that was humbly penitent. Marvellous to relate, the hood, when withdrawn from the midst of the flames, shewed no trace of burning. Thus it came to pass that, through this one miracle, God commended both the virtue of the holy man, and the humility of penitence.

Thus the humility of Francis is meet to be imitated, that even on earth gained such wondrous honour as that God condescended unto his desires, and changed the feelings of men, drove forth the arrogance of demons at his bidding, and by a mere gesture bridled the ravenous flames. Verily, this humility it is that exalteth them that possess it, and that, while paying respect unto all, from all gaineth honour.

Chapter VII

OF HIS LOVE FOR POVERTY, AND OF THE WONDROUS SUPPLYING OF HIS NEEDS

1. Among other gifts of graces that Francis had received from the bounteous Giver, he merited to abound, as by an especial prerogative all his own, in the riches of simplicity, through his love of sublimest Poverty. The holy man regarded Poverty as the familiar friend of the Son of God, and as one now rejected by the whole world, and was zealous to espouse her with such a constant affection as that not only did he leave father and mother for her sake, but he did even part with all that might have been his. For none was ever so greedy of gold as he of poverty, nor did any man ever guard treasure more anxiously than he this Gospel pearl. One thing more than aught else was displeasing in his eyes, to wit, if he beheld aught in the Brethren that was not wholly in accord with poverty. He himself, verily, from his entrance into the Religion until his death was content with, and counted himself rich with, a tunic, a cord, and breeches. Ofttimes with tears he would recall unto mind the poverty of Christ Jesus, and of His Mother, declaring Poverty to be the queen of virtues inasmuch as she shone forth thus excellently in the King of Kings and in the Queen His Mother. And when the Brethren in council asked of him which virtue would render a man most pleasing unto Christ, he answered, as though laying bare the secret thought of his heart, "Ye know. Brethren, that poverty is an especial way of salvation, being as it were the food of humility, and the root of perfection, and her fruits are manifold, albeit hidden. For poverty is that treasure hid in

a field of the Gospel, which to buy a man would sell all that he hath, and the things that cannot be sold are to be despised in comparison therewith.”

2. He also said, “He that would attain this height must needs in all ways renounce not alone the wisdom of the world, but even knowledge of letters, so that, dispossessed of such an inheritance, he may go in the strength of the Lord, and give himself up naked into the arms of the Crucified. For in vain doth he utterly renounce the world who keepeth in the secret places of his heart a shrine for his own senses. Ofttimes indeed would he discourse of poverty, impressing on the Brethren that saying of the Gospel, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His Head.” Wherefore he would teach the Brethren that, after the fashion of the poor, they should build poor little houses, wherein they should dwell, not as their owners, but as pilgrims and strangers dwell in other men’s houses. For he said that the rules of pilgrims were to abide under a strange roof, to thirst for their fatherland, and to pass on their way in peace. More than once, he bade houses that had been built be pulled down, or the Brethren removed thence, if he saw in them aught that by reason of ownership or of magnificence was opposed unto Gospel poverty. Poverty he declared to be the foundation of his Order, and, with this first laid as a basis, he said the whole edifice of the Religion would so rest upon it as that, while it stood firm, the Religion stood firm; were it overthrown, that other likewise would be overthrown from the foundations.

3. Furthermore, he taught, as he had learnt by revelation, that the entrance into holy Religion must be made through that saying of the Gospel: “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor”; and accordingly he would admit none into the Order that had not dispossessed themselves, keeping absolutely naught back, both because of the saying of the Holy Gospel, and that there might be no treasure-chests laid up to cause scandal. Thus, when a certain man, in the March of Ancona, sought to be received into the Order, the true patriarch of the poor made answer: “If thou art fain to be joined unto the poor of Christ, part thy goods among the poor of this world.” Hearing this, the man arose, and, led by carnal affection, bequeathed his goods unto his own kin, and naught unto the poor. But when the holy man heard of this from his own mouth, he chid him with stem

reproofs, saying: “Go thy way, brother fly, for thou hast not yet gotten thee out from thy kindred and from thy father’s house. Thou hast given thy goods unto thy kin, and hast cheated the poor, thou art not meet for the holy poor. Thou hast begun in the flesh, and hast laid but a shaking foundation for a spiritual edifice.” Then that carnal man returned unto his kin, and sought again his goods, the which he was not minded to bequeath unto the poor; thus quickly he abandoned his virtuous intent.

4. At another time, there was in the place of Saint Mary of the Little Portion such scarcity as that they could not provide for the guest Brethren as their needs demanded. Accordingly, his Vicar went unto the man of God, pleading the destitution of the Brethren, and begging that he would permit some portion of the novices’ goods to be retained on their entrance, so that the Brethren might resort thereunto for their expenditure in times of need. Unto whom Francis, instructed in the heavenly counsels, made reply: “Far be it from us, dearest Brother, to act wickedly against the Rule for the sake of any man whomsoever. I had liefer that thou shouldst strip the altar of the glorious Virgin, when our need demandeth it, than that thou shouldst attempt aught, be it but a little thing, against our vow of poverty and the observance of the Gospel. For the Blessed Virgin would be better pleased that her altar should be despoiled, and the counsel of the Holy Gospel perfectly fulfilled, than that her altar should be adorned, and the counsel given by her Son set aside.”

5. When on a time the man of God was passing, with a companion, through Apulia, and was nigh unto Bari, he found in the road a great purse, swelling as though full of coins, such as in the common speech is called funda. The poor man of Christ was exhorted, and earnestly besought, by his companion, to lift the purse from the ground, and distribute the money among the poor. But the man of God refused, declaring that there was some devilish contrivance in the purse that they had found, and that what the Brother was proposing was no good deed but a sin, to wit, taking goods not their own and giving them away. They left the spot, and hastened to complete the journey on which they had entered. Howbeit, that Brother would not hold his peace, deceived by an empty piety, but still vexed the man of God, as though he were one who cared naught for relieving the

destitution of the poor. At length the gentle Francis consented to return unto the spot, not to fulfil the desire of the Brother, but to unmask the wiles of the devil. Accordingly, returning where the purse lay, with the Brother and with a youth who was on the road, he first prayed, and then bade his companion take it up. The Brother trembled and was adread, now presaging some devilish portent; nevertheless, by reason of the command of holy obedience, he conquered the doubts of his heart, and stretched forth his hand unto the purse. Lo! a serpent of no mean size leapt forth from the purse, and at once vanished together with it, shewing that it had been a snare of the devil. The wiles of the enemy's cunning being thus apparent, the holy man said unto his companion: "Money, O my brother, is unto the servants of God naught else than the devil and a poisonous serpent."

6. After this, a wondrous thing befell the holy man while that, at the call of a pressing need, he was betaking him unto the city of Siena. Three poor women, alike in all respects as to height, age, and countenance, met him on the wide plain between Campiglio and San Quirico, proffering a new greeting by way of gift: "Welcome," said they, "Lady Poverty!" At these words, that true lover of poverty was filled with joy unspeakable, inasmuch as there was naught in him that he would so lief have saluted by men as that whereof they had made mention. On a sudden the women vanished, whereupon the Brethren that were his companions pondered on their wondrous resemblance each unto the other, and on the newness of their greeting, their appearing, and their vanishing, and deemed, not without reason, that some mystery was thereby signified concerning the holy man. Verily, by those three poor women,—for such they seemed,—with such resemblance in countenance, that met him, that gave him such unwonted greeting, and that so suddenly vanished, it was fittingly shewn that the beauty of Gospel perfection,—touching chastity, to wit, and obedience, and poverty,—shone forth perfectly in kindred form in the man of God; howbeit, he had chosen to make his chief boast in the privilege of Poverty, whom he was wont to name now his mother, now his bride, now his lady. In this, he was greedy to surpass others, he who thereby had learnt to think himself of less account than all others. Accordingly, if ever he saw any man who, judging by his outward appearance, was poorer than himself, he

would forthwith blame himself, and stir himself up unto the like, as though, striving jealously after poverty, he feared to be outdone by that other.

It chanced once that he met a poor man on the road, and, beholding his nakedness, was stricken to the heart, and said with a sighing voice unto his companion: “This man’s destitution hath brought on us great reproach, for we have chosen Poverty as our great riches, and lo! she shineth forth more clearly in him.”

7. By reason of his love for holy Poverty, the servant of Almighty God had far liefer partake of alms begged from door to door than of food set before him. Thus, if ever he was invited by great folk, who would fain honour him by a well-spread board, he would first beg crusts of bread from the neighbouring houses, and then, thus enriched in his poverty, sit down at the board. Once he did thus when he had been invited by the lord Bishop of Ostia, who loved the poor man of Christ with an especial affection, and when the Bishop complained that it brought shame upon him that a guest at his table should go forth for alms, the servant of God made answer: “My lord, I have done you a great honour, while honouring a greater Lord. For poverty is well-pleasing unto the Lord, and that before all which is a free-will beggary for the sake of Christ. This royal dignity,—that the Lord Jesus took upon Him when for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich, and that He might make them that be truly poor in spirit kings and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven,—I am not minded to abandon for a fee of deceptive riches lent unto you for an hour.”

8. Ofttimes when he was exhorting the Brethren to go forth for alms, he would speak on this wise: “Go forth,” saith he, “since at this eleventh hour the Brothers Minor have been lent unto the world, that the number of the elect may be in them fulfilled; wherefore they shall be praised by the Judge, and shall hear those most delectable words: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” Accordingly, he would say it was a delightful thing to beg under the name of Brothers Minor, since the Master of Gospel truth had with His own mouth thus spoken of that name,—” the least,”—in the rewarding of the just. Moreover, on the chief Feasts, when opportunity offered, he was wont to go begging, saying that in the holy poor was fulfilled that prophecy:

“Man did eat Angels’ food.” For he said that bread was truly Angels’ food that was begged for the love of God, and with the aid of the blessed Angels, and that holy Poverty gathered from door to door, where it was bestowed for love of her.

9. Accordingly, when he was once sojourning on the holy Easter Day in an hermitage so distant from the dwellings of men as that he could not conveniently go forth to beg, mindful of Him Who on that day had appeared unto the disciples going unto Emmaus in the guise of a pilgrim, he, as a pilgrim and beggar, did ask alms from the Brethren themselves. And, having humbly received them, he taught them in holy discourse that while passing through the wilderness of the world as pilgrims and strangers, and Israelites indeed, they might celebrate continually, as those poor in spirit, the Lord’s Passover, to wit, His departure from this world unto the Father. And since in asking alms he was moved, not by desire for gain, but by a free spirit, God, the Father of the poor, seemed to have an especial care of him.

10. It chanced once that the servant of the Lord had been weighed down by sickness in the place called Nocera, and was being brought back unto Assisi by an honourable escort, sent for this purpose by the devotion of the people of Assisi. And they, escorting the servant of Christ, reached a poor little hamlet, Satriano by name, whither, since their hunger and the hour demanded it, they went to seek food, but, finding naught that they could buy, returned empty handed. Then the holy man said unto them: “Naught have ye found, for that ye put more trust in your flies than in God,”—for he was wont to call money flies. “But go back, (saith he), among the houses that ye have visited, and, offering the love of God as your payment, humbly ask an alms. And do not by a false reckoning esteem this a thing shameful or base, since the great Almsgiver hath in His abounding goodness granted all things as alms unto the worthy and unworthy alike, after we have sinned.” Then those knights laid aside their shamefastness, and of their own accord asked for alms, and bought more for the love of God than they had been able to for money. For the poor inhabitants of the place, stricken to the heart by a divine impulse, freely proffered not only their goods, but their

very selves. Thus it befell that the necessity, which money had not availed to relieve, was supplied by the rich poverty of Francis.

11. On a time when he was lying sick in an hermitage nigh Rieti, a certain physician did oft visit him with welcome ministries. And since the poor man of Christ was unable to give him a recompense meet for his toil, the most bountiful God, on behalf of His poor, rewarded his kindly service by this singular benefit, that he might not depart with no immediate fee. The house of the physician, which he had at that time built anew with the whole of his savings, by a gaping cleavage of the walls from top to bottom threatened so speedy a collapse as that it seemed impossible that any mortal skill or toil should avert its fall. Then the physician, entirely trusting in the merits of the holy man, with great faith and devotion besought from his companions the gift of some thing that that same man of God had touched with his hands. Accordingly, having with much importunity of pleading gained a few of his hairs, he laid them at even in the cleavage of the wall; then, rising next mom, he found the opening so firmly sealed as that he could not withdraw the relics he had placed therein, nor find any trace of the former cleavage. Thus it came to pass that he who had diligently tended the frail body of God's servant was able to avert the danger from his own frail house.

12. On another time, when the man of God was fain to betake him unto a certain solitude, where he might more freely give himself up unto contemplation, he rode, being weak in body, upon the ass of a poor man. While this man was following the servant of Christ in the summer heat, and up mountain ways, he became worn out by the journey, as the path grew ever rougher and longer, and, fainting with exceeding and burning thirst, he began to cry aloud with importunity after the Saint: "Lo! (saith he), I shall die of thirst, if I be not at once refreshed by the help of some draught!" Without delay, the man of God got off the ass, fell on his knees, and, raising his hands unto heaven, ceased not to pray until he knew that he had been heard. His prayer at length ended, he said unto the man: "Hasten unto yonder rock, and there thou shalt find a spring of water, that Christ in His mercy hath at this hour caused to flow from the rock for thee to drink." O marvellous condescension of God, that doth so readily incline unto His

servants! The thirsty man drank the water produced from the rock by the power of him that prayed, and drained a draught from the flinty rock. Before that time there had been no flowing water there, nor from that time,—as hath been carefully ascertained,—hath any been found there.

13. Now in what manner, by the merits of His poor one, Christ multiplied provisions at sea, shall be related in its own place hereafter; suffice it to note this only, that by the scanty alms brought unto him he saved the sailors from the peril of famine and of death during many days; thus it may be clearly seen that the servant of God Almighty, as he was made like unto Moses in the drawing of water from the rock, was made like also unto Elias in the multiplying of food. Wherefore let all anxious thought be far removed from the poor ones of Christ. For if the poverty of Francis was of such an abundant sufficiency as that it supplied by its wondrous power the needs of them that assisted him,—so that neither food, nor drink, nor house failed them, when the resources of money, of skill, and of nature had proved of none avail,—much more shall it merit those things that in the wonted course of the divine providence are granted unto all alike. If, I say, the stony rock, at the prayer of one poor man, poured forth a copious draught for another poor man in his thirst, naught in the whole creation will refuse its service unto those who have left all for the sake of the Creator of all.

Chapter VIII

OF THE KINDLY IMPULSES OF HIS PIETY AND OF HOW THE CREATURES LACKING UNDERSTANDING SEEMED TO BE MADE SUBJECT UNTO HIM

1. That true godliness which, according unto the Apostle, is profitable unto all things, had so filled the heart of Francis and entered into his inmost parts as that it seemed to have established its sway absolutely over the man of God. It was this piety that, through devotion, uplifted him toward God; through compassion, transformed him into the likeness of Christ; through condescension, inclined him unto his neighbour, and, through his all-embracing love for every creature, set forth a new picture of man's estate before the Fall. And as by this piety he was touched with kindly feeling for all things, so above all, when he beheld souls redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ Jesus being defiled by any stain of sin, he would weep over them with such tenderness of compassion as that he seemed, like a mother in Christ, to be in travail of them daily. And this was with him the chief cause of his veneration for the ministers of the word of God, to wit, that with devout care they raise up seed unto the Brother which is dead, that is, unto Christ crucified for sinners, by converting such, and cherish the same seed with careful devotion. This ministry of compassion he maintained was more acceptable unto the Father of mercies than all sacrifice, in especial if it were performed with the zeal of perfect charity, so that this end might be striven after by ensample rather than by precept, by tearful prayer rather than by eloquent speech.

2. Accordingly, he would say that that preacher should be deplored as one without true piety, who in his preaching did not seek the salvation of souls, but his own glory, or who by the sins of his life pulled down that which he built up by the truth of his teaching. He would say that the Brother simple and unready of speech, who by his good ensample inciteth others unto good, should be preferred before such an one. That saying, moreover: "The barren hath borne many," he would thus expound: "The barren, (saith he), is the little poor Brother, who hath not the function of begetting sons in the Church. He in the Judgement shall bear many, for that those whom he now converteth unto Christ by his secret prayers shall be then added unto his glory by the Judge. And 'she that hath many children is waxed feeble,' for that the empty preacher of many words who now boasteth in many begotten, as it were, by his power, shall then perceive that there is naught of his own in them."

3. Since then with heartfelt piety and glowing zeal he sought after the salvation of souls, he would say that he was filled with the sweetest fragrance, and anointed as with precious ointment whensoever he heard of many being led into the way of truth by the sweet savour of the repute of the holy Brethren scattered throughout the world. Hearing such reports, he would rejoice in spirit, heaping with blessings most worthy of all acceptance those Brethren who, by word or deed, were bringing sinners onto the love of Christ. In like wise, those who were transgressing against holy Religion .by their evil works, fell under the heaviest sentence of his curse. "By Thee," saith he, "O Lord most holy, by the entire company of heaven, and by me, Thy little one, be they accursed who by their evil ensample do bring unto naught and destroy that which through the holy Brethren of this Order Thou hast built up, and dost not cease to build." Ofttimes he was affected by such sadness, by reason of the stumbling-block unto the weak brethren, that he thought his strength would have failed him, had he not been sustained by the comfort of the Divine mercy.

But when once on a time he was disquieted because of evil ensamples, and with troubled spirit was beseeching the merciful Father for his sons, he obtained an answer on this wise from the Lord: "Why dost thou fret thee, poor little mortal? Have I set thee as shepherd over My Religion that thou

shouldst forget I am its chief Protector? I have appointed thee, simple as thou art, for this very end, that the things that I shall perform through thee may be ascribed, not unto man's working, but unto grace from above. I have called this Religion, I will keep it and feed it, and, when some fall off, I will raise up others in their place, yea, so that, were none born, I would even cause them to be born. And by whatsoever shocks this little poor Religion may be shaken, it shall alway abide unscathed under My guard."

4. The vice of slander, hateful unto the fount of goodness and grace, Francis would shrink from as from a serpent's tooth, declaring it to be a most hateful plague, and an abomination unto the most holy God, forasmuch as the slanderer feedeth on the blood of those souls that he hath slain by the sword of his tongue. Hearing once a certain Brother blacken the repute of another, he turned unto his Vicar, and said: "Rise, rise, make careful inquiry, and, if thou findest the accused Brother to be guiltless, with stern discipline make the accuser to be marked of all." At times, indeed, he would sentence him who had despoiled his Brother of the praise of his good repute to be himself despoiled of his habit, and deemed that he ought not to be able to lift up his eyes unto God unless first he had exerted himself to restore as best he might, that which he had taken away. "The sin of slanderers," he would say, "is more heinous than that of robbers, inasmuch as the law of Christ,—that is fulfilled in the observance of godliness,—bindeth us to desire more the salvation of the soul than of the body."

5. Unto them that were afflicted with bodily snaring of any sort, he would condescend with a marvellous tenderness of sympathy; if he perceived in any aught of destitution, aught of lack, he would in the gentleness of his devout heart carry it unto Christ. Mercy, verily, was inborn in him, and redoubled by the shedding upon it of the piety of Christ. Thus his soul was melted over the poor and the weak, and, when he could not open his hand unto any, he opened his heart. It chanced on a time that one of the Brethren had made somewhat harsh reply unto a poor man that importunately asked an alms. When the devout lover of the poor heard it, he bade that Brother throw himself, naked, at the poor man's feet, declare himself in fault, and beg the favour of his prayer and his pardon. When he had humbly done this, the Father gently added: "When thou seest a poor man, O Brother, a mirror

is set before thee of the Lord, and of His Mother in her poverty. In the infirm, do thou in like manner think upon the infirmities that He took upon Him.” In all the poor, he,—himself the most Christlike of all poor men,—beheld the image of Christ, wherefore he judged that all things that were provided for himself,—were they even the necessities of life,—should be given up unto any poor folk whom he met, and that not only as largesse, but even as if they were their own property.

It befell on a time that a certain beggar met him, as he was returning from Siena, when by reason of sickness he was wrapped in a cloak over his habit. Beholding with pitiful eye the poor man’s misery; “It behoveth us,” said he unto his companion, “to restore the cloak unto this poor man, for his own it is. For we received it but as a loan, until it should be our hap to find another poorer than ourselves.” But his companion, having regard unto the need of the kindly Father, did urgently seek to refrain him from providing for another, leaving himself uncared-for. Howbeit, “I think,” saith he, “the greet Almsgiver would account it a theft .in me did I not give that I wear unto one needing it more.” Accordingly he was wont to ask from those that had given him necessities for the succour of his body permission to give them away, did he meet a needier person, so that he might do so with their sanction. Naught would he withhold, neither cloak, nor habit, nor books, nor the very ornaments of the altar, but all these he would, while he could, bestow upon the needy, that he might fulfil the ministry of charity. Ofttimes whenas he met on the road poor folk carrying burdens, he would lay their burdens on his own weak shoulders.

6. When he bethought him of the first beginning of all things, he was filled with a yet more overflowing charity, and would call the dumb animals, howsoever small, by the names of brother and sister, forasmuch as he recognised in them the same origin as in himself. Yet he loved with an especial warmth and tenderness those creatures that do set forth by the likeness of their nature the holy gentleness of Christ, and in the interpretation of Scripture are a type of Him. Ofttimes he would buy back lambs that were being taken to be killed, in remembrance of that most gentle Lamb Who brooked to be brought unto the slaughter for the redemption of sinners.

On a time when the servant of God was lodging at the Monastery of San Verecondo in the diocese of Gubbio, an ewe gave birth unto a lamb one night. There was hard by a very fierce sow, and she, sparing not the innocent life, slew him with her greedy jaws. When the gentle Father heard thereof, he was moved with wondrous pity, and, remembering that Lamb without spot, mourned over the dead lamb in the presence of all, saying: "Woe is me, brother little lamb, innocent creature, setting forth Christ unto men! Cursed be that evil beast that hath devoured thee, and of her flesh let neither man nor beast eat." Marvellous to relate, the cruel sow forthwith began to languish, and in three days paid the penalty in her own body, and suffered death as her retribution. Her carcase was cast forth into a ditch near the Monastery, and there lay for a long time, dried up like a board, and food for no famished beast. Let human evil-doing, then, take note by what a punishment it shall be overtaken at the last, if the savageness of a brute beast was smitten by a death so awful: let faithful devotion also consider how in the servant of God was shewn a piety of such marvellous power and abundant sweetness, as that even the nature of brute beasts, after their own fashion, acclaimed it.

7. While he was journeying nigh the city of Siena, he came on a great flock of sheep in the pastures. And when he had given them gracious greeting, as was his wont, they left their feeding, and all ran toward him, raising their heads, and gazing fixedly on him with their eyes. So eagerly did they acclaim him as that both the shepherds and the Brethren marvelled, beholding around him the lambs, and the rams no less, thus wondrously filled with delight.

At another time, at Saint Mary of the Little Portion, a lamb was brought unto the man of God, the which he thankfully received, by reason of the love of guilelessness and simplicity that the lamb's nature doth exhibit. The holy man exhorted the lamb that it should be instant in the divine praises, and avoid any occasion of offence unto the Brethren; the lamb, on its part, as though it had observed the piety of the man of God, diligently obeyed his instructions. For when it heard the Brethren chanting in the choir, it too would enter the church, and, unbidden of any, would bend the knee, bleating before the altar of the Virgin Mother of the Lamb, as though it

were fain to greet her. Furthermore, at the election of the most holy Body of Christ in the solemn Mass, it would bend its knees and bow, even as though the sheep, in its reverence, would reprove the irreverence of the undevout, and would incite Christ's devout people to revere the Sacrament.

At one time he had with him in Rome a lamb, by reason of his reverence for that Lamb most gentle, and it he entrusted unto a noble matron, to wit, the lady Jacoba di Settesoli, to be cared for in her bower. This lamb, like one instructed in spiritual things by the Saint, when the lady went into church, kept closely by her side in going and in returning. If in the early morning the lady delayed her rising, the lamb would rise and would butt her with its little horns, and rouse her by its bleatings, admonishing her with gestures and nods to hasten into church. Wherefore the lamb, that had been a pupil of Francis, and was now become a teacher of devotion, was cherished by the lady as a creature marvellous and lovable.

8. At another time, at Greccio, a live leveret was brought unto the man of God, the which,—when set down free on the ground that it might escape whither it would,—at the call of the kindly Father leapt with flying feet into his bosom. He, fondling it in the instinctive tenderness of his heart, seemed to feel for it as a mother, and, bidding it in gentle tones beware of being recaptured, let it go free. But albeit it was set on the ground many times to escape, it did alway return unto the Father's bosom, as though by some hidden sense it perceived the tenderness of his heart; wherefore at length, by his command, the Brethren carried it away unto a safer and more remote spot.

In like manner, on an island of the lake of Perugia, a rabbit was caught and brought unto the man of God, and, albeit it fled from others, it entrusted itself unto his hands and bosom with the confidence of a tame creature.

As he was hastening by the lake of Rieti unto the hermitage of Greccio, a fisherman out of devotion brought unto him a water-fowl, the which he gladly received, and then, opening his hands, bade it depart; howbeit, it would not leave him. Then he, lifting his eyes unto heaven, remained for a long space in prayer, and, after a long hour returning unto himself as though from afar, gently bade the little bird depart, and praise the Lord. Then,

having thus received his blessing and leave, it flew away, shewing joy by the movement of its body.

In like manner, from the same lake there was brought unto him a fine, live fish, which he called, as was his wont, by the name of brother, and put back into the water nigh the boat. Then the fish played in the water nigh the man of God, and, as though drawn by love of him, would in no wise leave the boatside until it had received his blessing and leave.

9. On another time, when he was walking with a certain Brother through the Venetian marshes, he chanced on a great host of birds that were sitting and singing among the bushes. Seeing them, he said unto his companion: "Our sisters the birds are praising their Creator, let us too go among them and sing unto the Lord praises and the canonical Hours." When they had gone into their midst, the birds stirred not from the spot, and when, by reason of their twittering, they could not hear each the other in reciting the Hours, the holy man turned unto the birds, saying: "My sisters the birds, cease from singing, while that we render our due praises unto the Lord." Then the birds forthwith held their peace, and remained silent until, having said his Hours at leisure and rendered his praises, the holy man of God again gave them leave to sing. And, as the man of God gave them leave, they at once took up their song again after their wonted fashion.

At Saint Mary of the Little Portion, hard by the cell of the man of God, a cicada sat on a fig-tree and chirped; and right often by her song she stirred up unto the divine praises the servant of the Lord, who had learnt to marvel at the glorious handiwork of the Creator even as seen in little things. One day he called her, and she, as though divinely taught, lighted upon his hand. When he said unto her: "Sing, my sister cicada, and praise the Lord thy Creator with thy glad lay," she obeyed forthwith, and began to chirp, nor did she cease until, at the Father's bidding, she flew back unto her own place. There for eight days she abode, on any day coming at his call, singing, and flying back, according as he bade her. At length the man of God said unto his companions: "Let us now give our sister cicada leave to go, for she hath gladdened us enough with her lay, stirring us up these eight days past unto the praises of God." And at once, his leave given, she flew

away, nor was ever seen there again, as though she dared not in any wise transgress his command.

10. Once while he was lying ill at Siena a fresh-caught pheasant was sent unto him, alive, by a certain nobleman. The bird, so soon as it saw and heard the holy man, pressed nigh him with such friendliness as that it would in no wise brook to be parted from him. For, albeit it was several times set down in a vineyard outside the abode of the Brethren, so that it might escape if it would, it still ran back in haste unto the Father as though it had alway been brought up by his hand. Then, when it was given unto a certain man who was wont out of devotion to visit the servant of God, it seemed as though it grieved to be out of the sight of the gentle Father, and refused all food. At length, it was brought back unto the servant of God, and, so soon as it saw him, testified its delight by its gestures, and ate eagerly.

When he had come unto the solitudes of Alverna, to keep a Lent in honour of the Archangel Michael, birds of divers sort fluttered about his cell and seemed by their tuneful chorus and joyous movements to rejoice at his comings and to invite and entice the holy Father to tarry there. Seeing this, he said unto his companion: "I perceive, Brother, that it is in accord with the divine will that we should abide here for a space, so greatly do our sisters the little birds seem to take comfort in our presence." While, accordingly, he was sojourning in that place, a falcon that had its nest there bound itself by close ties of friendship unto him. For alway at that hour of night wherein the holy man was wont to rise for the divine office, the falcon was beforehand with its song and cries. And this was most acceptable unto the servant of God, the more so as that the great concern which the bird shewed for him shook from him all drowsiness of sloth. But when the servant of Christ was weighed down beyond his wont by infirmity, the falcon would spare him, and would not mark for him so early an awakening. At such times, as though taught of God, he would about dawn strike the bell of his voice with a light touch. Verily, there would seem to have been a divine omen, alike in the gladness of the birds of myriad species, and in the cries of the falcon, inasmuch as that praiser and worshipper of God, upborne on the wings of contemplation, was at that very place and time to be exalted by the vision of the Seraph.

11. At one time while he was sojourning in the hermitage of Greccio, the natives of that place were plagued by manifold evils. For an herd of ravening wolves was devouring not beasts alone, but men also, and every year a hailstorm laid waste their corn and vineyards. Accordingly, when the herald of the Holy Gospel was preaching unto them under these afflictions, he said: "I promise you,—pledging the honour and glory of Almighty God,—that all this plague shall depart from you, and that the Lord will look upon you, and multiply your temporal goods if only, believing me, ye will take pity on your own selves, and will first make true confession, then bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. But again, I declare unto you that if, unthankful for His benefits, ye shall turn again unto your vomit, the plague will be renewed, the punishment will be redoubled, and greater wrath will be shewn upon you." Then from that very hour, they turned at his admonition unto repentance, and the disasters ceased, the perils passed over, nor was aught of havoc wrought by wolves or hailstorms. Nay more, what is yet more marvellous, if a hailstorm ever fell upon their neighbours' lands, as it neared their borders it was there stayed, or changed its course unto some other region. The hail observed, yea, and the wolves observed, the pact made with the servant of God, nor did they essay any more to break the law of natural piety by raging against men that had turned unto piety, so long as men in their turn, according unto the agreement, did not act wickedly against the most holy laws of God.

With holy affection, then, must we think on the holiness of this blessed man, that was of such wondrous sweetness and might as that it conquered wild beasts, tamed woodland creatures, and taught tame ones, and inclined the nature of the brutes, that had revolted from fallen man, to obey him. For of a truth it is this piety which, allying all creatures unto itself, is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Chapter IX

OF HIS ARDENT LOVE, AND YEARNING FOR MARTYRDOM

1. Of the ardent love that glowed in Francis, the friend of the Bridegroom, who can avail to tell? He seemed utterly consumed, like unto a coal that is set on fire, by the flame of the love divine. For, at the mere mention of the love of the Lord, he was aroused, moved, and enkindled, as though the inner chords of his heart vibrated under the bow of the voice from without. He would say that it was a magnificent largesse to offer such wealth in exchange for alms, and that those who esteemed it of less worth than money were verily fools, for that the priceless price of the divine love alone availeth to purchase the kingdom of heaven, and His love Who hath loved us much is much to be loved.

That he might by all things be stirred up unto the divine love, he triumphed in all the works of the Lord's hands, and through the sight of their joy was uplifted unto their life-giving cause and origin. He beheld in fair things Him Who is the most fair, and, through the traces of Himself that He hath imprinted on His creatures, he everywhere followed on to reach the Beloved, making of all things a ladder for himself whereby he might ascend to lay hold on Him Who is the altogether lovely. For by the impulse of his unexampled devotion he tasted that fountain of goodness that streameth forth, as in rivulets, in every created thing, and he perceived as it were an heavenly harmony in the concord of the virtues and actions granted unto them by God, and did sweetly exhort them to praise the Lord, even as the Prophet David had done.

2. Christ Jesus Crucified was laid, as a bundle of myrrh, in his heart's bosom, and he yearned to be utterly transformed into Him by the fire of his exceeding love. By reason of his chief and especial devotion unto Him, he would betake him unto desert places, and seclude himself in a cell, from the Feast of the Epiphany until the end of the forty days following, to wit, for the space of time wherein Christ had sojourned in the wilderness. There with all the abstinence from food and drink that he might compass, he devoted himself without interruption unto fasting, prayer, and the praises of God. With such glowing love was he moved toward Christ, yea, and with such intimate love did his Beloved repay him that it seemed unto the servant of God himself that he felt his Saviour almost continually present before his eyes, even as he once revealed unto his companions in intimate converse.

Toward the Sacrament of the Lord's Body he felt a glowing devotion that consumed the very marrow of his bones, marvelling with utmost amazement at that most loving condescension and condescending love. Oft did he communicate, and so devoutly as to render others devout, while, as he tasted of the sweetness of that Lamb without spot, he became like one inebriated in spirit, and rapt out of himself in ecstasy.

3. He loved with an unspeakable affection the Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ, forasmuch as that she had made the Lord of Glory our Brother, and that through her we have obtained mercy. In her, after Christ, he put his chief trust, making her his own patron and that of his Brethren, and in her honour he fasted most devoutly from the Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul until the Feast of the Assumption. He was bound by ties of inseparable affection unto the Angelic spirits that do glow with wondrous fire to approach God, and in the kindling of elect souls, and out of devotion unto them he would fast for forty days from the Assumption of the glorious Virgin, remaining instant in prayer throughout that time. Unto the Blessed Michael Archangel,—inasmuch as his is the ministry of bringing souls before God,—he cherished an especial love and devotion, by reason of the ardent zeal that he had for the salvation of all such as should be saved. When he called to remembrance all the Saints, he was kindled afresh, as if they had been stones of fire, with the flame of heavenly love; he regarded with the utmost devotion all the Apostles, and in especial Peter and Paul, by

reason of the glowing love that they bore toward Christ, and out of reverence and love for them he dedicated unto the Lord the fast of an especial Lent. The poor man of Christ had naught save two mites, to wit, his body and soul, that he could give away in his large-hearted charity. But these, for the love of Christ, he offered up so continuously as that at all seasons, through the rigour of his fasting, he made an offering of his body, and through the fervour of his yearnings, of his spirit, sacrificing in the outer court a whole burnt-offering, and within, in the Temple, burning sweet incense.

4. Now this exceeding devotion of love uplifted him into the divine in such wise as that his loving goodwill extended unto those that had received with him a like nature and grace. For it is no wonder if he, whose affectionate heart had made him kin unto all created things, was by the love of Christ drawn into yet closer kinship with such as were sealed with the likeness of their Creator, and redeemed by the Blood of their Maker. He esteemed himself no friend of Christ did he not cherish the souls that He had redeemed. He would say that naught was to be preferred before the salvation of souls, proving this chiefly by the fact that the Only-Begotten Son of God deigned to hang on the Cross for the sake of men's souls. Unto this end he wrestled in prayer, this was the theme of his preaching, and this the cause of his exceeding zeal in setting an ensample. Wherefore, whensoever some excessive austerity was blamed in him, he would make answer that he had been given as an ensample unto others. For albeit his guileless flesh had already voluntarily subjected itself unto his spirit, and needed no chastisement by reason of transgressions, nevertheless, for the sake of ensample, he was ever renewing in it punishments and penances, walking in hard paths for the sake of others. For he would say: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of Angels, and have not charity, I shall set no ensample of virtues unto my neighbours, I shall profit others little, and mine own self naught."

5. He emulated, with an ardent flame of love, the glorious victory of the holy Martyrs, whose burning love could not be quenched, nor their constancy broken down. Accordingly he too, kindled by that perfect love that casteth out fear, yearned to offer himself up as a living sacrifice unto

the Lord in martyr flames, that he might pay back somewhat in his turn unto Christ Who died for us, and might stir up others unto the love of God. Wherefore, in the sixth year from his conversion, burning with desire for martyrdom, he was minded to cross unto the regions of Syria to preach the Christian faith, and penitence, unto the Saracens and other infidels. When he had embarked on a ship that he might voyage thither, contrary winds prevailed, and he had perforce to land on the coasts of Slavonia. When he had delayed there some time, nor could find any ship that was then crossing the sea, feeling himself cheated of his desire, he besought some sailors that were making for Ancona to take him aboard, for the love of God. When they persisted in their refusal because of his lack of money, the man of God, putting all his trust in the goodness of the Lord, embarked secretly on board the ship with his companion. A certain man was present,—sent, as is believed, from God on behalf of His poor one,—and he took with him the necessary victual, and, calling unto him one on the ship that feared God, spake thus unto him: “Keep faithfully all these things for the poor Brethren that lie hid on the ship, and in their hour of need deal them out unto them as a friend.” It befell that, owing unto strong winds, the sailors were unable for many days to touch land anywhere, and had consumed all their own provisions, and only the alms brought for the poor man Francis were left. These, though they had been but scanty, were by the divine power so multiplied as that, during many days’ delay at sea by reason of incessant storms, they fully supplied the needs of all until they made the port of Ancona. Then the sailors, seeing that through the servant of God they had escaped manifold agonies of death,—like men that had known the dire perils of the sea, and had seen the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep,—rendered thanks unto Almighty God, Who doth ever shew Himself marvellous and lovable in His friends and servants.

6. When, leaving the sea behind, Francis began to travel through the land, sowing therein the seed of salvation, he gained rich sheaves. Then, because the fruit of martyrdom had so enchanted his heart that he preferred above all merits of virtues a costly death for Christ’s sake, he took his way toward Morocco, that he might preach unto Miramolin and his people the Gospel of Christ, if by any means he might avail to gain the coveted palm. For he was borne along by so mighty a desire that, albeit weak in body, he outran the

comrade of his pilgrimage, and flew with all speed to fulfil his purpose, like one inebriated in spirit. But when he had advanced as far as Spain, by the divine will, that reserved him for other ends, a very heavy sickness fell upon him, and hindered him so that he could not fulfil his desire. Then the man of God,—perceiving that his life in the body was still needful for the family that he had begotten, albeit he deemed that for himself to die was gain,—returned to feed the sheep that had been committed unto his care.

7. Howbeit his glowing charity urged his spirit on unto martyrdom, and yet a third time he essayed to set forth toward the infidels, that by the shedding of his blood the Faith of the Trinity might be spread abroad. Thus in the thirteenth year of his conversion he set forth for the regions of Syria, continually exposing himself unto many perils that so he might win entrance into the presence of the Soldan of Babylon. For at that time there was relentless war between the Christians and the Saracens, and the camps of both armies were pitched each over against the other in the plain, so that none might pass from one unto the other without peril of death. Moreover, a cruel edict had gone forth from the Soldan that any who should bring the head of a Christian should receive a gold bezant as reward. Nevertheless, the undaunted soldier of Christ, Francis, hoping that he was shortly about to gain his end, determined to continue on his way, not dismayed by the fear of death, but urged on by his yearning therefor. And as he prepared himself by prayer, he was strengthened of the Lord, and boldly chanted that verse of the Prophet: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.”

8. Then, taking the Brother that was his companion, Illuminato by name, a man verily of illumination and virtue, they started on their way. And, meeting two lambs, the holy man was gladdened at the sight, and said unto his companion: “Put thy trust, Brother, in the Lord, for in us that saying of the Gospel is fulfilled: Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.” When they had gone on further, the bands of the Saracens met them, and they, like wolves making haste to fall upon sheep, brutally seized the servants of God, and cruelly and despitefully dragged them along, casting abuse at them, vexing them with stripes and binding them in fetters. Thus in manifold wise tormented and beaten down, they were brought

before the Soldan, the divine counsel so disposing as the holy man had desired. When that prince demanded of them from whom, and for what purpose, and after what manner they had been sent, and how they had come thither, the servant of Christ, Francis, made answer with undaunted heart that he had been sent not by man, but by God Most High, that he might shew unto him and his people the way of salvation, and might preach the Gospel of truth. With such firmness of mind, with such courage of soul, and with such fervour of spirit he preached unto the Soldan aforesaid God Three and One and the Saviour of all, Jesus Christ, that in him was manifestly and truly fulfilled that saying of the Gospel: "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." For, as the Soldan beheld the marvellous fervour of spirit and valour of the man of God, he heard him gladly and did right earnestly invite him to tarry with him. Then the servant of Christ, taught by the heavenly counsel, said: "If thou, together with thy people, wilt be converted unto Christ, for the love of Him I will right gladly tarry among you. But if thou art hesitating whether to give up the law of Mahomet for the faith of Christ, do thou command that a great fire be kindled and I will enter the fire with thy priests, that even thus thou mayest learn which faith is the surer, and holier, and most worthy of being held. Unto whom the Soldan made answer: "I do not believe that any of my priests would be ready to expose himself unto the fire in defence of his faith, or to undergo any sort of torture." For he had seen that, so soon as mention of this was made, one of his priests, an aged man and one in authority, had fled from his presence. Unto whom the holy man replied: "If thou wilt promise me, on behalf of thyself and thy people, that thou wilt embrace the faith of Christ, if I come forth from the fire unscathed, I will enter the fire alone; if I am burned, let it be set down unto my sins, but if the divine might protect me, ye shall know that Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God, is the true God and the Lord and Saviour of all." Howbeit, the Soldan replied that he dare not accede unto this proposition, for that he feared a revolt of his people. But he offered him many costly gifts, all of which the man of God, hungering, not for worldly goods, but for the salvation of souls, contemned like mire. The Soldan, perceiving the holy man to be so absolute a despiser of worldly things, was moved with amazement and conceived a greater devotion for him. And, albeit he would not, or perchance dared not, go over unto the Christian

faith, he did nevertheless devoutly pray the servant of Christ to receive the gifts aforesaid, for his own salvation, and to bestow them upon Christian poor folk, or on churches. But Francis, for that he shunned the burden of money, and could not see in the soul of the Soldan any root of true piety, would not agree thereunto.

9. Seeing, then, that he could neither make progress in the conversion of that people, nor attain his purpose, warned by a divine revelation, he returned unto the regions of the faithfull. Now the mercy of God so ordained, and the virtue of the holy man merited, and mercifully and marvellously it befell, that the friend of Christ,—who with all his might sought a death for His sake, and yet in no way could find it,—nevertheless did not lose the coveted merit of martyrdom, and was reserved to be signalled out unto posterity by an especial distinction. Thus it befell that that divine fire glowed ever more hotly in his heart, so that afterward it was openly manifested in his flesh. O truly blessed man, whose flesh, albeit not stricken by the tyrant's steel, was nevertheless not left without the likeness of the Lamb that was slain! O fully and truly blessed, I say, whose life, albeit not cut off by the sword of the persecutor, did yet not lose the palm of martyrdom!

Chapter X

OF HIS ZEAL AND EFFICACY IN PRAYER

1. Francis, the servant of Christ, feeling himself in the body to be absent from the Lord, had now through the love of Christ become wholly untouched by earthly desires, wherefore,—that he might not be without the consolation of his Beloved,—he prayed without ceasing, striving ever to manifest a spirit present with God. Prayer was a consolation unto him in contemplation, while, being already made a fellow-citizen with the Angels in the circle of the heavenly mansions, with ardent yearning he sought his Beloved, from Whom the wall of the flesh alone parted him. It was, moreover, a defence unto him in his labours, while in all that he did, distrusting his own working, and relying on the heavenly goodness, he cast all his care upon the Lord in earnest prayer.

He would confidently affirm that the grace of prayerfulness should be more desired than all others by the religious man, and,—believing that without it no good could be wrought in the service of God,—he would stir up his Brethren unto zeal therefor by all means that he could. For, whether walking or sitting, within doors or without, in toil or at leisure, he was so absorbed in prayer as that he seemed to have devoted thereunto not only his whole heart and body, but also his whole labour and time.

2. Nor was he ever wont to pass over heedlessly any spiritual visitation. When it came unto him, he followed after it, and, for as long as the Lord granted it unto him, he rejoiced in its proffered sweetness. If, while absorbed in thought on a journey, he felt some breathings of the divine Spirit, he would let his companions go on before, and would himself stay

his steps, and turn the new inspiration into fruitfulness, not receiving the grace in vain. Ofttimes he was rapt in such ecstasies of contemplation as that he was carried out of himself, and, while perceiving things beyond mortal sense, knew naught of what was happening in the outer world around him.

Thus, when he was passing on a time through Borgo San Sepolcro, a very populous town, riding on an ass because of his bodily weakness, he met crowds of folk that ran together out of devotion unto him. Yet albeit they touched him, and delayed his progress, crowding round him and in many ways pressing upon him, he seemed as one that felt naught, and, even as though he had been a dead body, perceived no whit what was being done around him. Accordingly, when they had long since passed through the town and left the crowds behind them, and had come unto a certain leper settlement, that contemplator of heavenly things, like one returning from another world, anxiously enquired when they would draw nigh unto Borgo. For his mind, intent on heavenly glories, had not perceived the changes of place and time, nor of the folk that met them.

And that this oft befell him, the repeated experience of his companions attested.

3. Moreover,—as he had experienced in prayer that the longed-for presence of the Holy Spirit vouchsafed itself by so much the more intimately unto suppliants as it found them removed from the noise of worldlings,—he would seek lonely places, going to pray by night in solitudes and in deserted churches. There ofttimes he endured dire assaults from demons, who, struggling with him in perceptible form, strove to disturb him in his exercise of prayer. But he, furnished with heavenly arms, the more desperate his enemies' attack, was rendered by so much the more strong in might and fervent in prayer, saying with confidence unto Christ: "Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me." But unto the demons he would say: "Do unto me aught that ye can, evil and false spirits. For ye have no power, save that which is granted you from the divine hand, and here am I, ready to bear with all gladness all things whatsoever that has decreed to inflict upon me." Then the proud demons, not able to brook this constancy of mind, retreated in confusion.

4. But the man of God, remaining alone and at peace, filled the woods with his sighing, bedewed the ground with his tears, and beat his breast with his hands, and, like one who hath gained a secret and hidden thing, spake familiarly with his Lord. There he made answer unto his Judge, there he made supplication unto his Father, there he held converse with his Friend, there too he was at times heard by the Brethren, who out of filial piety watched him, to invoke the divine mercy for sinners with cries and wailings, yea, and to lament aloud as though the Lord's Passion were set before his eyes. There he was beheld praying by night, his hands stretched out after the manner of a Cross, his whole body uplifted from the earth, and wrapt in a shining cloud, as though the wondrous illumination of the body were a witness unto the wondrous enlightenment of his mind. There, moreover, as is attested by sure signs, the unknown and hidden things of the divine wisdom were laid bare unto him, albeit he did not publish them abroad, save in so far as the love of Christ constrained him, and the profit of his neighbours demanded. For he would say: "For a trifling gain, one may chance to lose a priceless thing, and may easily provoke him that gave it to give no more."

When he returned from his private prayers, in the which he became changed almost into another man, he endeavoured with all diligence to make himself like unto others, lest perchance that which was shewn outwardly should by the breath of popular applause depart from the gain within. Whensoever he was rapt on a sudden in public, and visited of the Lord, he would alway make some pretext unto them that stood by, lest the intimate visitations of the Spouse should be published abroad. When that he was praying among the Brethren, he utterly avoided coughings, groanings, hard breathing, and outward gestures, either because he loved secrecy, or because, shutting himself up within himself, he was wholly borne away unto God. Ofttimes he would speak on this wise unto his intimate companions: "When the servant of God is visited of God in prayer, he ought to say 'This comfort, O Lord, Thou hast sent from heaven unto me, a sinner and unworthy, and I commit it unto Thy care, for that I feel me to be a thief of Thy treasure.' When, therefore, he returneth from praying, he ought thus to shew himself as a little poor One and a sinner, not as one who hath attained unto any new grace."

5. Once when the man of God was praying in the place of the Little Portion, it chanced that the Bishop of Assisi came to visit him, as was his wont. He at once on entering the place betook him unto the cell wherein the servant of Christ was praying, with more boldness than was seemly, and, knocking at the door, was about to enter; but, as he thrust in his head, and beheld the Saint in prayer, a sudden trembling gat hold of him, his limbs became rigid, and he lost the power of speech; then suddenly he was driven forth by force, by the divine will, and with returning steps was led afar off. All astonished, the Bishop hastened unto the Brethren with all the speed he might, and, God restoring unto him his speech, with his first words he declared his fault.

It befell on a time that the Abbot of the Monastery of Saint Justin in the diocese of Perugia met the servant of Christ. Beholding him, the devout Abbot with all speed alighted from his horse, that he might both do reverence unto the man of God and hold some converse with him concerning his soul's welfare. At length, their sweet conference over, the Abbot, as he departed, humbly besought that prayers should be offered on his behalf. Unto whom the man dear unto God made answer: "I will pray for thee with goodwill." Accordingly, when the Abbot had departed a little space, the faithful Francis spake unto his companion: "Tarry for me awhile. Brother, for I am minded to pay the debt that I have promised." While, then, he was praying, on a sudden the Abbot felt in his spirit an unwonted glow and a sweetness hitherto unknown, in such wise as that he was carried out of himself in an ecstasy, and wholly loosed from himself and absorbed in God. This lasted but for a brief space, after which he came unto himself again, and recognised the efficacy of the prayer of Saint Francis. Thenceforward he did alway bum with greater love toward the Order, and recounted this event unto many as a miracle.

6. The holy man was wont to say the Canonical Hours before God not less reverently than devoutly. For albeit he suffered from infirmities of the eyes, the stomach, spleen, and liver, yet would he never lean against an outer or inner wall, while he was intoning them, but alway said the Hours standing upright, and without his hood, not letting his eyes roam about, nor cutting short his words. If he were on a journey, he would, when the time came, stay his steps, nor would he omit this reverent and holy habit for any storm

of rain. For he would say: “If the body needeth quiet when it partaketh of the bread that, like itself, shall become food for worms, with how much peace and calm doth it behove the soul to receive the Bread of Life ?” Grievously did he consider himself to have stumbled if ever, while giving himself unto prayer, his mind was led astray of empty fantasies. When anything of the like happened, he made mention thereof in confession, that he might forthwith atone for it. This earnestness he had so turned into an habit that right seldom did he suffer from flies of this sort.

One Lent, he had made a little vase, that he might fill up his spare moments, and they not be utterly wasted. But forasmuch as while saying Tierce this came into his memory and a little distracted his mind, he, moved by the fervour of his spirit, burnt the little vase in the fire, saying: “I will sacrifice it unto the Lord, Whose sacrifice it hath hindered.” It was his wont to say the Psalms with mind and spirit as attent as though he saw God present before his eyes, and when the Name of the Lord occurred therein, he seemed to refresh his very lips with the savour of its sweetness. He was fain that that same Name of the Lord, not alone when it was meditated upon, but also when it was uttered or written, should be honoured with an especial reverence, and at times he would prevail on the Brethren to collect all papers with writing upon them, wheresoever they might find them, and to lay them in some seemly place, lest perchance that sacred Name might happen to be written thereon, and so trodden underfoot. And when he uttered or heard the Name of Jesus, he was filled with an inward rejoicing, and seemed all transfigured outwardly, as though some honey-sweet taste had soothed his palate, or some melodious sound his ear.

7. Now three years before his death it befell that he was minded, at the town of Greccio, to celebrate the memory of the Birth of the Child Jesus, with all the added solemnity that he might, for the kindling of devotion. That this might not seem an innovation, he sought and obtained license from the Supreme Pontiff, and then made ready a manger, and bade hay, together with an ox and an ass, be brought unto the spot. The Brethren were called together, the folk assembled, the wood echoed with their voices, and that august night was made radiant and solemn with many bright lights, and with tuneful and sonorous praises. The man of God, filled with tender love,

stood before the manger, bathed in tears, and overflowing with joy. Solemn Masses were celebrated over the manger, Francis, the Levite of Christ, chanting the Holy Gospel. Then he preached unto the folk standing round of the Birth of the King in poverty, calling Him, when he wished to name Him, the Child of Bethlehem, by reason of his tender love for Him. A certain knight, valorous and true, Messer John of Greccio, who for the love of Christ had left the secular army, and was bound by closest friendship unto the man of God, declared that he beheld a little Child right fair to see sleeping in that manger. Who seemed to be awakened from sleep when the blessed Father Francis embraced Him in both arms. This vision of the devout knight is rendered worthy of belief, not alone through the holiness of him that beheld it, but is also confirmed by the truth that it set forth, and withal proven by the miracles that followed it. For the ensample of Francis, if meditated upon by the world, must needs stir up sluggish hearts unto the faith of Christ, and the hay that was kept back from the manger by the folk proved a marvellous remedy for sick beasts, and a prophylactic against divers other plagues, God magnifying by all means His servant, and making manifest by clear and miraculous portents the efficacy of his holy prayers.

Chapter XI

OF HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCRIPTURES, AND OF HIS SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

1. Unto such a tranquillity of mind had his unwearied zeal for prayer and continuous practice of virtue brought the man of God that—albeit he had no instruction or learning in the sacred writings—yet, illumined by the beams of eternal light, he searched the deep things of the Scriptures with marvellous intellectual discernment. For his genius, pure from all stain, penetrated into the hidden places of the mysteries, and, where the learning of a theologian tarrieth without, the feelings of the lover led him in. At times he would read in the sacred books, and whatsoever had once been presented unto his mind became indelibly imprinted on his memory, for it was not in vain that he comprehended by hearing and by an attent mind that which he ever meditated upon with the love of an unceasing devotion. Once when the Brethren asked whether it were his will that the clerks that had been already received into the Order should devote themselves unto the study of Holy Scripture, he made answer: “It is indeed my will, yet for so long alone as they follow the example of Christ, Who, we read, prayed more than He read, and for so long as they do not lose their zeal for prayer, nor study only that they may know how they ought to speak; rather let them study that they may be doers of the word, and, when they have done it, may set forth unto others what they too should do. I am fain, (saith he), that my Brethren should be learners of the Gospel, and thus make progress in knowledge of the truth, that they should grow in the purity of guilelessness, so that they sever not the harmlessness of the dove from the wisdom of the

serpent, which twain the greatest Teacher hath joined together with His blessed mouth.”

2. Being asked at Siena by a certain devout man, a doctor of sacred theology, concerning sundry problems hard of understanding, he laid bare the hidden things of the divine wisdom with such luminous exposition that that learned man was mightily astonished, and exclaimed in amazement: “Verily, the theology of this holy Father, borne aloft by purity and meditation as though by wings, is as a flying eagle, while our learning creepeth on its belly on the earth.” For, albeit he were unskilled in speech, yet, full of learning, he unravelled the knots of problems, and the thing that was hid he brought forth into the light. Nor was it unfitting that the holy man should receive from God an understanding of the Scriptures, seeing that by the imitation of Christ he fulfilled and set forth in his deeds their perfect truth, and by the abundant anointing of the Holy Spirit had within him, in his own heart, an instructor therein.

3. So mightily did the spirit of prophecy shine forth in him that he both foreknew what was to come, and beheld the secrets of men’s hearts, and perceived absent things as though they were present, and in wondrous wise manifested his own presence unto them that were absent. For on a time when the Christian army was besieging Damietta, the man of God was present, fortified not by arms but by faith. When on the day of battle the Christians were preparing them for the conflict, and the servant of Christ heard thereof, he groaned bitterly, and said unto his companion: “If they essay to join battle, the Lord hath shewn me that it will not fare well with the Christians; but, if I say this, I shall be accounted a fool; if I keep silence, I shall not escape the reproaches of my conscience. What, then, dost thou advise?” His companion replied: “Brother, do thou esteem it but a light thing to be judged of men, for that thou dost not now make a beginning of being accounted a fool. Unburden thy conscience, and fear God rather than men.” Hearing this, the herald of Christ hastened forth, and approached the Christians with salutary warnings, forbidding the battle, and prophesying its issue. The truth was unto them as a vain tale, they hardened their hearts and would not turn back. They went into the field, they joined battle, they fought, and the entire Christian host was put to the rout, thus winning

shame, not triumph, as the ending of the warfare. In this dread defeat, the Christian host was so diminished that there were about six thousand slain or captured. Thereby was it clearly made manifest that the wisdom of the poor man, Francis, had not been meet for contempt, for the mind of a righteous man is sometime wont to tell him more than seven watchmen, that sit above in an high tower.

4. At another time, when he was returned from beyond seas, and had come unto Celano to preach, a certain Knight with humble devoutness and great importunity invited him to dine with him. He came accordingly unto the house of the Knight, and the whole household rejoiced over the coming of their poor guests. Before they partook of the meal, Francis, as he was wont, stood with eyes uplift to heaven, with a devout mind offering unto God prayers and praises. His prayer ended, he called aside his kindly host in familiar wise, and thus addressed him: “Lo, my brother and host, yielding unto thine importunity I have come unto thy house to eat. Do thou now yield speedily unto my exhortations, forasmuch as thou shalt eat not here, but elsewhere. Confess now thy sins, and be contrite with the grief of a true repentance, nor let aught abide in thee that thou dost not lay bare in sincere confession. The Lord will reward thee this day for that thou hast received His poor with such devoutness.” The Knight yielded forthwith unto the words of the holy man, unto whose companion he disclosed all his sins in confession, and then set his house in order, and prepared himself, in so far as he might, for death. At length they sat down to table, and, while the rest were beginning to eat, the host on a sudden gave up the ghost, carried off by a sudden death according unto the word of the man of God. And thus it befell, by the merits of his gracious hospitality, that, according unto the Word of truth, “He that receiveth a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward”; for by the prophetic prediction of the holy man that devout Knight made himself ready against the sudden onset of death, inasmuch as, fortified by the weapons of penitence, he was able to escape eternal condemnation and enter into the everlasting tabernacles.

5. Once on a time, while the holy man was lying sick at Rieti, a prebendary, Gideon by name, a man unstable and worldly, that had been stricken with a sore disease and was lying in his bed, was brought unto him, and with tears

besought him—as did the bystanders—that he would make over him the sign of the Cross. Unto him he said: “Since aforetime thou wert living after the lusts of the flesh, not fearing the judgements of God, how can I sign thee with the Cross? Howbeit, for the sake of the devout prayers of these that plead for thee, I will make over thee the sign of the Cross in the name of the Lord. Yet be thou well assured that a worse thing will befall thee if, when thou hast been set free, thou shalt return unto thy vomit. For the sin of ingratitude ever bringeth with it worse evils than were suffered afore.” Then, when the sign of the Cross was made over him, at once he that had lain paralysed rose up whole, and, breaking forth into God’s praises, “I,” saith he, “am set free!” His bones cracked within him, in the hearing of many, even as when dry wood is broken by the hand. Yet when but a short time had passed by, he forgot God, and again yielded his body unto unchastity. When one evening he had supped in the house of a certain Canon, and was sleeping there that night, on a sudden the roof of the house fell in above them all. But while the rest escaped death, that wretched man alone was overtaken and cut off. Thus by a righteous judgement of God the last state of that man was worse than the first, by reason of his sin of ingratitude, and contempt of God, since it had behoved him to be grateful for the pardon that he had gained, and since a crime when repeated is twofold an offence.

6. On another time, a devout woman of noble birth came unto the holy man to unfold her grief unto him and to ask a remedy. Now she had a right cruel husband, from whom she suffered opposition in the service of Christ, wherefore she besought the holy man that he would pray for him that God would deign to soften his heart with His own mercy. Hearing this, Francis said unto her, “Go in peace, and confidently await from thine husband the comfort that he shall speedily afford thee.” And he added: “Say unto him from God and from me that now is the day of mercy, hereafter that of justice.” When he had blessed her, the woman returned, found her husband, and declared what had been spoken. Then the Holy Spirit fell upon him and changed him into a new man, making him in all gentleness reply thus: “Lady, let us serve the Lord, and save our souls.” Then by the persuasions of his devout wife for many years they lived a life of continence, and both on the same day departed unto the Lord. Of a truth, we must marvel at the

might of the spirit of prophecy that was found in the man of God, through the which he restored unto withered limbs their power, and impressed on hard hearts godliness; albeit no less must we be astonished at the clear perception of that spirit, whereby he so foreknew the issue of future events that he could search even the secret things of men's consciences, having obtained, like another Elisha, a double portion of the spirit of Elias.

7. Once when at Siena he had decisively foretold unto a certain friend some events that should come to pass, that learned man—of whom mention hath been made above as to his conferring with him about the Scriptures—heard thereof, and, doubting, asked the holy Father whether he had said the things that he had heard from the narration of that other. Then Francis not only declared that he had so spoken, but also foretold by prophecy that man's own end, who was thus asking concerning another. And that he might the more surely impress this on his heart, he revealed unto him a certain hidden scruple of his conscience, which that man had never laid bare unto any living, and by thus marvellously revealing the same he explained it, and by his salutary counsels laid it low. To confirm the truth of all this, it befell that that same devout man came unto his end at the last in the manner foretold him by the servant of Christ.

8. Once, moreover, when he was returning from beyond sea, with Brother Leonard of Assisi as his companion, it chanced that, worn out and weary as he was, he was riding on an ass. His companion, as he followed him,—himself no little wearied,—began to say within himself, with a touch of human weakness: "This man's family was not of equal standing with mine own. And now, look you, he rideth, and I on foot lead his ass." Even as he thus reasoned, the holy man forthwith dismounted from the ass, saying : "It is not fitting. Brother, that I should ride, and thou walk afoot, for that in the world thou wert of nobler birth and more standing than I." Then the Brother was dumb with amazement, and blushed for shame, and, perceiving his fault, fell at the other's feet, which he bedewed with tears, and laid bare what had been his thought, and implored pardon.

9. A certain Brother, devoted unto God, and unto the servant of Christ, oft meditated in his heart how that one must be meet for the divine grace whom the holy man embraced with intimate friendship, yet nevertheless he

thought himself considered of God as a stranger, outside the number of the elect. Being, then, oftentimes harassed by the oncoming of such thoughts, he ardently desired the intimate friendship of the man of God, yet did not lay bare unto any the secret of his heart; him the kindly Father called gently unto him, and thus addressed: "Let no thoughts disturb thee, my son, for I hold thee most dear, and amongst those most especially dear unto me I do gladly bestow upon thee the gift of my friendship and my love." Thereat the Brother marvelled, and from being devout became ever more devout, and not only increased in love of the holy man, but was also laden, through the gift of the grace of the Holy Spirit, with greater endowments.

Now while Francis was sojourning on Mount Alverna, secluded in his cell, one of his companions did mightily desire to possess some of the words of the Lord written by his hand, and with brief notes thereupon. For, having it, he believed that he might escape a grievous temptation, not of the flesh, but of the spirit, by the which he was distressed, or assuredly might be enabled to bear it more easily. While he was pining with such a desire, he suffered torments within, being overcome with shamefastness, nor daring to lay the matter before his venerated Father. But though man told it not unto him, the Spirit revealed it. For he bade the Brother aforesaid bring unto him ink and parchment, and according unto the desire of the Brother he wrote with his own hand the praises of the Lord thereon, and finally, a blessing for him, saying: "Take unto thyself this parchment, and keep it with care until the day of thy death." The Brother received the gift he had so desired, and forthwith that temptation utterly departed from him. The writing was preserved, and forasmuch as in later days it wrought miracles, it became a witness unto the virtues of Francis.

10. Now there was a Brother eminent, in so far as outward appearance went, for his sanctity, distinguished in his converse, yet somewhat singular in bearing. Devoting his whole time unto prayer, he observed silence with such rigour as that he was wont to make his confession not by words, but by nods. Now it chanced that the holy Father came unto that place and beheld the Brother, and spake concerning him with the other Brethren. When they all praised and glorified him, the man of God made answer: "Beware, Brethren, lest ye praise unto me in him the deceitful semblances of the

devil. Know in truth that this is a temptation of the devil, and a deceitful snare.” The Brethren were loth to believe this, judging it almost impossible that the devices of a false seeming should adorn themselves with so many evidences of perfection. Yet of a truth, on his leaving the Religion not many days after, it was manifestly seen with what clearness of inward vision the man of God had discerned the secrets of his heart.

After this manner he would predict with irrefragable truth the fall of many who seemed to stand, but also the conversion unto Christ of many who were turned aside, so that he seemed to have approached unto the mirror of eternal light to gaze therein, and by its wondrous radiance the sight of his mind surely perceived things that were absent in bodily form, even as though they were present.

11. Thus, on a time when his Vicar was holding a Chapter, and he himself was in his cell praying, he was a mediator between the Brethren and God. For when one of them, sheltering himself under some cloak of defence, would not yield himself up unto discipline, the holy man beheld this in spirit, and called one of the Brethren, and said unto him: “I saw, Brother, the devil sitting upon the back of that disobedient Brother, holding his neck gripped, for he, driven by such a master, spurning the bridle of obedience, had given the reins unto his instincts. And when I besought God for the Brother, at once the devil withdrew in confusion. Go then and bid the Brother yield his neck with all speed unto the yoke of holy obedience.” The Brother, exhorted by the messenger, forthwith turned unto God, and humbly threw himself at the feet of the Vicar.

12. Again it befell on a time that two Brethren had come from afar unto the hermitage of Greccio, that they might behold the man of God, and carry away with them his blessing, the which they had long time coveted. They came and found him not, for that he had returned from the common dwelling-place unto his cell, wherefore they were departing disconsolately. Lo, as they were withdrawing, Francis, who could have known naught by human perception of their arrival or departure, contrary unto his wont came forth of his cell, called after them, and, according unto their desire, made the sign of the Cross over them, blessing them in the name of Christ.

13. Once two Brethren were come from Terra di Lavoro, the elder of whom had given some offence unto the younger. But when they came before the Father, he asked of the younger how the Brother that was his companion had behaved toward him on the way. On his making answer: "Well enough," he responded: "Beware, Brother, that thou lie not under pretext of humility, for I know, I know,—do thou wait a while and thou shalt see." The Brother was mightily astonished in what wise he had perceived in spirit what had taken place so far off. Accordingly, not many days after, he that had given the offence unto the Brother, spurning the Religion, went out utterly, not seeking pardon from the Father, nor submitting unto the discipline of correction that was his due. Thus two things were made manifest at the same time in the ruin of this one man, to wit, the justice of the divine judgments, and the clear vision of the spirit of prophecy.

14. In what wise Francis showed himself present unto them that were absent, by the working of the divine power, is clearly apparent from what hath been afore related, if we recall unto mind how in his absence he appeared unto the Brethren as one transfigured, in a chariot of fire, and how at the Chapter of Arles he shewed himself with arms outstretched after the likeness of a Cross. This we must believe to have been wrought by the divine ruling, that by the miraculous appearance of his bodily presence it might be abundantly evident how that his spirit was present in and penetrated by the light of the eternal wisdom, which is more moving than any motion, and goeth through all things by reason of her pureness, and entering into holy souls maketh them friends of God, and prophets. For the most exalted Teacher is wont to reveal His mysteries unto the babes and simple, as was first seen in David, the most lofty of the Prophets, and afterward in the Prince of the Apostles, Peter, and lastly in Francis, the little poor one of Christ. For these, albeit they were simple, and unskilled in letters, were made famous by the teaching of the Holy Spirit; the first a shepherd, to feed the flock of the Synagogue that was brought forth out of Egypt; the second a fisher, to fill the great net of the Church with a multitude of believers; the last a merchantman, to buy the pearl of Gospel life, when that he had sold and disposed of all things for the sake of Christ.

Chapter XII

OF THE EFFICACY OF HIS PREACHING, AND OF HIS GIFT OF HEALING

1. The truly faithful servant and minister of Christ, Francis, that he might faithfully and perfectly fulfil all things, strove most chiefly to exercise those virtues that he knew, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, were most pleasing unto his God. Wherefore it came to pass that he fell into great striving with himself by reason of a doubt, the which that he might end,—on his return after many days of prayer,—he set before the Brethren that were his intimates. “What,” saith he, “do ye counsel, Brethren, what do ye commend? Shall I devote myself unto prayer, or I shall go about preaching? Of a truth, I that am little, and simple, and rude in speech have received more grace of prayer than of speaking. Now in prayer, there seemeth to be the gain and heaping up of graces, in preaching, a certain giving out of the gifts received from heaven; in prayer, again, a cleansing of the inward feelings, and an union with the one, true, and highest good, together with a strengthening of virtue; in preaching, the spiritual feet wax dusty, and many things distract a man, and discipline is relaxed. Finally, in prayer, we speak with God and hear Him, and live as it were the life of Angels, while we converse with Angels; in preaching, we must needs practise much condescension toward men and living among them as fellow-men must think, see, say, and hear such things as pertain unto men. Yet one thing is there to set against these, the which in God’s sight would seem to weigh more than they all, to wit, that the only-begotten Son of God, Who is the highest wisdom, left His Father’s bosom for the salvation of souls, that, instructing the world by His ensample, He might preach the word of salvation unto men, whom He both redeemed at the cost of His sacred

Blood, and cleansed in a laver and gave them to drink, keeping back naught of Himself, but for our salvation freely bestowing all. And forasmuch as we ought to do all things after the pattern of those things that was shewn us in Him as on the lofty mount, it seemeth that it might be more acceptable unto God that, laying aside leisure, I should go forth unto the work.” And albeit for many days he pondered over such sayings with the Brethren, he could not of a surety discern whether of the twain he should choose as more truly pleasing unto Christ. For albeit he had known many wondrous things through the spirit of prophecy, he was not able thereby to resolve this question clearly, the providence of God better ordaining, so that the merit of preaching might be made evident by an heavenly oracle, and the humility of Christ’s servant be kept intact.

2. He, true Brother Minor, was not ashamed to ask little things from those less than himself, albeit he had learnt great things from the greatest Teacher. For with an especial zeal he was wont to enquire after what way and manner of life he might most perfectly serve God according unto His will. This was his highest philosophy, this his highest desire, so long as he lived, so that he would enquire of wise and simple, of perfect and imperfect, of young and old, in what wise he might with most holiness attain unto the summit of perfection. Therefore, calling unto him twain of the Brethren, he sent them unto Brother Silvester,—he that had seen the Cross proceeding from his mouth, and was at that time giving himself up unto continuous prayer in the mountain above Assisi,—that he might seek an answer from God concerning this doubt, and announce it unto him from the Lord. This same bidding he laid upon the holy virgin Clare, that through some of the purer and simpler of the virgins that were living under her rule, yea, and through her own prayers united with those of the other Sisters, she might ascertain the will of the Lord touching this matter. The reverend priest and the virgin vowed unto God were marvellously in agreement concerning this, the Holy Spirit revealing it unto them, to wit, that it was the divine will that the herald of Christ should go forth to preach. When, therefore, the Brethren returned, and, according unto what they had heard, pointed out the will of God, Francis forthwith rose and girded himself, and without any delay set forth on his journey. And with such fervour did he go, to fulfil the divine

behest, and with such speed did he hasten on his way, that he seemed—the hand of the Lord being upon him—to have put on new power from heaven.

3. When he drew nigh unto Bevagna he came unto a spot wherein a great multitude of birds of divers species were gathered together. When the holy man of God perceived them, he ran with all speed unto the place and greeted them as if they shared in human understanding. They on their part all awaited him and turned toward him, those that were perched on bushes bending their heads as he drew nigh them, and looking on him in unwonted wise, while he came right among them, and diligently exhorted them all to hear the word of God, saying: “My brothers the birds, much ought ye to praise your Creator, Who hath clothed you with feathers and given you wings to fly, and hath made over unto you the pure air, and careth for you without your taking thought for yourselves.” While he was speaking unto them these and other like words, the little birds—behaving themselves in wondrous wise—began to stretch their necks, to spread their wings, to open their beaks, and to look intently on him. He, with wondrous fervour of spirit, passed in and out among them, touching them with his habit, nor did one of them move from the spot until he had made the sign of the Cross over them and given them leave; then, with the blessing of the man of God, they all flew away together. All these things were witnessed by his companions that stood awaiting him by the way. Returning unto them, the simple and holy man began to blame himself for neglect in that he had not afore then preached unto the birds.

4. Thence, while going among the neighbouring places to preach, he came unto a town named Alviano, where, when the folk were gathered together and silence had been bidden, he could yet scarce be heard by reason of the swallows that were there building their nests, and twittering with shrill cries. The man of God, in the hearing of all, addressed them, and said: “My sisters the swallows, ’tis now time that I too should speak, seeing that until now ye have said your say. Harken unto the word of God, and keep silence, until the preaching of the Lord be ended.” Then they, as though gifted with understanding, on a sudden fell silent, nor moved from the spot until the whole preaching was finished. All they that saw it were filled with

amazement, and glorified God. The report of this marvel spread on all sides, and kindled in many reverence for the Saint, and devotion unto the faith.

5. Again, in the city of Parma, a scholar of good disposition that with his comrades was busily intent on study, was troubled by the importunate twittering of a certain swallow, and began to say unto his comrades: "This swallow is one of those that troubled the man of God, Francis, on a time when he was preaching, until he bade them be silent." Then, turning unto the swallow, with all confidence he said: "In the name of Francis, the servant of God, I bid thee come hither to me forthwith, and keep silence." Then the bird, hearing the name Francis, like one instructed by the teaching of the man of God, at once fell silent, and withal gave herself up into his hands as though into safe keeping. The scholar, in amazement, forthwith set her free again, and heard her twittering no more.

6. On another time, when the servant of God was preaching on the seashore at Gaeta, crowds gathered about him out of devotion, that they might touch him; whereupon the servant of Christ, shrinking from such homage of the folk, leapt alone into a little boat that was lying by the beach. And the boat, as though impelled by a reasoning power from within, without any rowing put out unto some distance from land, while all beheld it and marvelled. But when it was withdrawn some little distance into deep water, it stayed motionless among the waves, while the holy man preached unto the waiting crowds upon the shore. When the discourse was ended, and the miracle perceived, and his blessing given, the throng gave place, in order that they might no more disturb him, and the little boat of its own guidance put in again unto land.

Who then could be of so obstinate and wicked mind as to despise the preaching of Francis, by whose wondrous might it came to pass that not only creatures lacking reason were amenable unto his correction, but that even lifeless objects, as though they had life, ministered unto him while preaching?

7. Thus there was ever present with His servant Francis, in whatsoever he did, He Who had anointed him and sent him, the Spirit of the Lord, yea, and Christ Himself, Who is the power of God and the wisdom of God, that he

might abound in words of healthful teaching and shine in the light of miracles of great power. For his speech was as a burning fire, penetrating the secrets of the heart, and he filled the minds of all with amazement, since he set forth no adornments of men's invention, but savoured of the breath of divine revelation. Thus on a time, when he was about to preach in the presence of the Pope and the Cardinals, at the suggestion of the lord Bishop of Ostia he had committed unto memory a certain carefully prepared sermon, and, standing in the midst to set forth the words of edification, found that he had so utterly forgotten it all as that he knew not how to speak a word thereof. When with fruitful humility he had confessed this, he set himself to invoke the grace of the Holy Spirit, and forthwith began to pour forth words so mighty in effect, and of such wondrous power to move the minds of those illustrious men unto repentance, as that it was manifestly seen that it was not himself that spake, but the Spirit of the Lord.

8. And forasmuch as he did himself first practise that which he afterward preached unto others, he feared none that might blame him, but did most faithfully preach the truth. It was not his way to smooth over the faults of any, but to smite them, nor to flatter the life of sinners, but rather to aim at it with stem reproofs. Unto great and small alike he spake with the same firm spirit, and he would as joyfully address him unto few as unto many. Folk of every age and either sex hastened to see and to hear this man, newly given unto the world from heaven. He, indeed, as he went throughout divers districts, preached the Gospel with fervour, the Lord working with him and confirming the word with signs following. For in the power of His Name Francis, the herald of the truth, did cast forth demons, heal the sick, and, what is more, by the might of his preaching did soften and make penitent hard hearts, restoring health unto body and mind at the same time, even as the instances of his working to be cited below give proof.

9. In the city of Toscanella, he was devoutly entertained as guest by a certain Knight, whose only son was crippled from birth; at his own urgent entreaty, he raised him with his hands, and so suddenly made him whole that, in the sight of all, his limbs were all forthwith strengthened, and the boy, made whole and strong, rose up at once, walking and leaping and praising God.

In the city of Narni, when, at the entreaty of the Bishop, he had made the sign of the Cross from head to foot over a certain paralytic who had lost the use of all his limbs, he restored him perfectly unto health.

In the diocese of Rieti, a boy that from the age of four had been so swollen that he could in no wise look on his own legs, was brought unto him by his mother with tears, and forthwith, when the Saint touched him with his holy hands, was healed.

In the city of Orte, a boy was so deformed that his head rested on his feet, and some of his bones were broken; he, when Francis at the tearful entreaties of his parents had made the sign of the Cross over him, on a sudden stood upright, and was from that moment unloosed.

10. A certain woman in the city of Gubbio had both her hands so withered and paralysed that she could do no work with them; she, when Francis had made the sign of the Cross over her in the name of the Lord, gained such absolute healing that, returning home forthwith, she prepared with her own hands food for him and for the poor, even as Peter's wife's mother did.

A girl in the town of Bevagna had lost her sight, but when her eyes had been thrice anointed with his spittle in the name of the Trinity she regained her longed-for sight.

A woman in the city of Narni, stricken with blindness, when the sign of the Cross was made over her by Francis, recovered the sight she yearned for.

A boy in Bologna had one of his eyes so clouded by a spot that he could see nothing therewith, nor find relief by any remedy; howbeit when the servant of the Lord had made the sign of the Cross over him from head to foot, he recovered his sight perfectly, insomuch as that, entering the Order of Brothers Minor thereafter, he affirmed that he saw far better with the eye that aforetime was clouded than with the eye that had been alway sound.

In the town of San Gemini, the servant of God was received as guest by a certain devout man whose wife was tormented by a demon; after he had prayed, he commanded the demon on obedience to go out from her, and by the divine power put him so instantly to flight as that it became clearly

evident that the audacity of demons availeth not to resist the power of holy obedience.

In Citta di Castello, a raging and evil spirit possessed a woman; he, charged on obedience by the holy man, went out in wrath, leaving the woman that had been possessed free alike in mind and body.

11. One of the Brethren was afflicted with such an horrible disease as that it was asserted of many to be rather a tormenting from demons than a natural sickness. For oftentimes he was quite dashed down on the ground, and wallowed foaming, with his limbs now drawn up, now stretched forth, now folded, now twisted, now become rigid and fixed. At times he was quite stretched out and stiff, and with his feet on a level with his head, would be raised into the air, and would then fall back again in dreadful fashion. The servant of Christ, full of compassion, pitied him in his so lamentable and incurable sickness, and sent unto him a morsel of the bread wherefrom he had been eating. When the sick man had tasted the bread, he received such power as that never thenceforward did he suffer trouble from that sickness.

In the province of Arezzo, a woman for many days had laboured in childbirth, and was now nigh unto death; she was utterly despairing of her life, and no resource was left her but in God. Now the servant of Christ, by reason of his bodily weakness, had travelled on horseback through those regions, and it chanced that the beast was led back through the village wherein the woman lay suffering. The men of the place, seeing the horse whereon the holy man had sat, took off the bridle, that they might lay it on the woman, and at the marvellous touch thereof all danger was banished, and the woman forthwith was delivered in safety.

A certain man of Citta della Pieve, devout and one that feared God, had by him a cord wherewith the holy Father had been girt. Whereas a great number of men and women in that city were afflicted by divers diseases, he went among the homes of them that were sick, and, dipping the cord in water, gave drink therefrom unto the sufferers, and thus by this means very many were cured. Moreover, the sick who tasted of bread touched by the man of God, by the efficacy of the divine power obtained right speedily healing cures.

12. Forasmuch as the preaching of the herald of Christ was illuminated by these and many other portents and miracles, the words that fell from him were listened for as eagerly as though it were an Angel of the Lord speaking. For there was in him a surpassing excellence of the virtues, the spirit of prophecy, power of miracles, an eloquence in preaching inspired from heaven, the submission unto him of the creatures that lack reason, a mighty moving of men's hearts at the hearing of his words, a learning given him of the Holy Spirit beyond all human teaching, licence to preach granted him by the supreme Pontiff as the result of a revelation, yea, and the Rule too, wherein the manner of the preaching was set forth, confirmed by that same Vicar of Christ, and, finally, the signs of the King Most High imprinted on his body after the manner of a seal; these gave unanswerable evidence unto the whole world, as it were by ten witnesses, that Francis the herald of Christ was worthy of reverence in his ministry, was of authority in his teaching, and was to be marvelled at in his saintliness, and that through these virtues he had preached the Gospel of Christ like one that was indeed a messenger of God.

Chapter XIII

OF THE SACRED STIGMATA

1. It was the custom of that angelic man, Francis, never to be slothful in good, but rather, like the heavenly spirits on Jacob's ladder, to be ever ascending toward God, or stooping toward his neighbour. For he had learnt so wisely to apportion the time granted unto him for merit that one part thereof he would spend in labouring for the profit of his neighbours, the other he would devote unto the peaceful ecstasies of contemplation. Wherefore, when according unto the demands of time and place he had stooped to secure the salvation of others, he would leave behind the disturbances of throngs, and seek a hidden solitude and a place for silence, wherein, giving himself up more freely unto the Lord, he might brush off any dust that was clinging unto him from his converse with men. Accordingly, two years before he yielded his spirit unto heaven, the divine counsel leading him, he was brought after many and varied toils unto an high mountain apart, that is called Mount Alverna. When, according unto his wont he began to keep a Lent there, fasting, in honour of Saint Michael Archangel, he was filled unto overflowing, and as never before, with the sweetness of heavenly contemplation, and was kindled with a yet more burning flame of heavenly longings, and began to feel the gifts of the divine bestowal heaped upon him. He was borne into the heights, not like a curious examiner of the divine majesty that is weighed down by the glory thereof, but even as a faithful and wise servant, searching out the will of God, unto Whom it was ever his fervent and chief desire to conform himself in every way.

2. Thus by the divine oracle it was instilled into his mind that by opening of the Book of the Gospels it should be revealed unto him of Christ what

would be most pleasing unto God in him and from him. (Wherefore, having first prayed very devoutly, he took the holy Book of the Gospels from the altar, and made it be opened, in the name of the Holy Trinity, by his companion, a man devoted unto God, and holy. As in the threefold opening of the Book, the Lord's Passion was each time discovered, Francis, full of the Spirit of God, verily understood that, like as he had imitated Christ in the deeds of his life, so it behoved him to be made like unto Him in the trials and sufferings of His Passion before that he should depart from this world. And, albeit by reason of the great austerity of his past life, and continual sustaining of the Lord's Cross, he was now frail in body, he was no whit afeared, but was the more valorously inspired to endure a martyrdom. For in him the all-powerful kindling of love of the good Jesu had increased into coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame, so that many waters could not quench his love, so strong it was.

3. When, therefore, by seraphic glow of longing he had been uplifted toward God, and by his sweet compassion had been transformed into the likeness of Him Who of His exceeding love endured to be crucified,—on a certain morning about the Feast of the Exaltation of Holy Cross, while he was praying on the side of the mountain, he beheld a Seraph having six wings, flaming and resplendent, coming down from the heights of heaven. When in his flight most swift he had reached the space of air nigh the man of God, there appeared betwixt the wings the Figure of a Man crucified, having his hands and feet stretched forth in the shape of a Cross, and fastened unto a Cross. Two wings were raised above His head, twain were spread forth to fly, while twain hid His whole body. Beholding this, Francis was mightily astonished, and joy, mingled with sorrow, filled his heart. He rejoiced at the gracious aspect wherewith he saw Christ, under the guise of the Seraph, regard him, but His crucifixion pierced his soul with a sword of pitying grief. He marvelled exceedingly at the appearance of a vision so unfathomable, knowing that the infirmity of the Passion doth in no wise accord with the immortality of a Seraphic spirit. At length he understood therefrom, the Lord revealing it unto him, that this vision had been thus presented unto his gaze by the divine providence, that the friend of Christ might have foreknowledge that he was to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ Crucified, not by martyrdom of body, but by enkindling

of heart. Accordingly, as the vision disappeared, it left in his heart a wondrous glow, but on his flesh also it imprinted a no less wondrous likeness of its tokens. For forthwith there began to appear in his hands and feet the marks of the nails, even as he had just beheld them in that Figure of the Crucified. For his hands and feet seemed to be pierced through the midst with nails, the heads of the nails shewing in the palms of the hands, and upper side of the feet, and their points shewing on the other side; the heads of the nails were round and black in the hands and feet, while the points were long, bent, and as it were turned back, being formed, of the flesh itself, and protruding therefrom. The right side, moreover, was—as if it had been pierced by a lance—seamed with a ruddy scar, wherefrom oftentimes welled the sacred blood, staining his habit and breeches.

4. Now the servant of Christ perceived that the stigmata thus manifestly imprinted on his flesh could not be hidden from his intimate friends; nevertheless, fearing to make public the holy secret of the Lord, he was set in a great strife of questioning, to wit, whether he should tell that which he had seen, or should keep it silent. Wherefore he called some of the Brethren, and, speaking unto them in general terms, set before them his doubt, and asked their counsel. Then one of the Brethren, Illuminato by name, and illuminated by grace, perceiving that he had beheld some marvellous things, inasmuch as that he seemed almost stricken dumb with amaze, said unto the holy man: “Brother, thou knowest that at times the divine secrets are shewn unto thee, not only for thine own sake, but for the sake of others also. Wherefore, meseemeth thou wouldst have reason to fear lest thou shouldst be judged guilty of hiding thy talent, didst thou keep hidden that which thou hast received, which same would be profitable unto many.” At this speech, the holy man was moved, so that, albeit at other times he was wont to say “ My secret to me,” he did then with much fear narrate in order the vision aforesaid, adding that He who had appeared unto him had said some words the which, so long as he lived, he would never reveal unto any man. Verily we must believe that those utterances of that holy Seraph marvellously appearing on the Cross were so secret that perchance it was not lawful for a man to utter them.

5. Now after that the true love of Christ had transformed His lover into the same image, and after that he had spent forty days in solitude, as he had determined, when the Feast of Saint Michael Archangel came, this angelic man, Francis, descended from the mountain, bearing with him the likeness of the Crucified, engraven, not on tables of stone or of wood, by the craftsman's hand, but written on his members of flesh by the finger of the Living God. And forasmuch as it is good to keep close the secret of a King, the man that shared this so royal secret did ever hide those sacred signs as best he might. Howbeit, since it pertaineth unto God to reveal the great things that He doth for His glory, the Lord Himself, Who had imprinted those seals upon him in secret, wrought divers miracles openly by means thereof, that the hidden and wondrous power of those stigmata might be demonstrated by the well-known fame of the signs that followed.

6. Thus, in the province of Rieti, there had prevailed a very grievous plague, the which devoured all oxen and sheep so cruelly that no succour had been of any avail. But a certain man that feared God was warned at night by a vision to go in haste unto an hermitage of the Brethren, and obtain some water that had washed the hands and feet of the servant of God, Francis, who at that time was sojourning there, and to sprinkle it over all the animals. Accordingly, he rose at dawn, and came unto the place, and, having secretly obtained this water from the companions of the holy man, he sprinkled therewith the sheep and oxen that were diseased. Wondrous to relate, so soon as the sprinkling, were it but a drop, fell upon the sick animals as they lay on the ground, they recovered their former strength, and got up forthwith, and, as though they had felt no sickness, hastened unto the pastures! Thus it befell, through the marvellous virtue of that water that had touched the sacred wounds, that the whole plague was at once stayed, and the contagious sickness banished from the flocks and herds.

7. In the neighbourhood of the aforesaid Mount Alverna, before that the holy man had sojourned there, a cloud was wont to arise from the mountain, and a fierce hailstorm to lay waste the fruits of the earth. But after that blessed vision, to the amazement of the inhabitants, the hail ceased, that the excellence of that heavenly apparition and the virtue of the stigmata that

were there imprinted might be attested by the very face of the heavens, made calm beyond its wont.

Moreover, it befell one winter season that, by reason of his bodily infirmity, and of the roughness of the roads, he was riding on a poor man's ass, and was obliged to pass the night under the edge of an overhanging rock, that he might by any means escape the inconveniences of the snow and night that had overtaken them, the which hindered him so that he was not able to reach the place wherein he was to lodge. And when Francis perceived that this man was muttering, sighing, and complaining, and was tossing himself to and fro, like one thinly clad, and unable to sleep by reason of the bitter cold,—he, kindled with the glow of the love divine, touched him with his outstretched hand. Marvellous to relate, so soon as that holy hand that bore the burning of the live coal of the Seraph touched him, his sense of cold was utterly banished, and as great a warmth came upon him within and without as if the flaming breath from the mouth of a furnace had blown upon him. Strengthened thereby in mind and body, he slept more sweetly until the morning among the rocks and snow than he had ever done resting in his own bed, even as he himself did thereafter declare.

Wherefore it is proven by sure tokens that those sacred seals were imprinted by the might of Him Who doth by the ministry of Seraphs purify, enlighten, and kindle, seeing that they brought health out of pestilence by driving it forth, and with wondrous efficacy bestowed ease and warmth upon men's bodies, even as after his death was shewn by yet more clear portents that shall be related hereafter in their own place.

8. Francis himself, albeit he strove with great diligence to hide the treasure found in the field, could nevertheless not so conceal it as that some should not behold the stigmata in his hands and feet, although he almost always kept his hands covered, and from that time forth wore sandals on his feet. For, while he yet lived, many Brethren saw them, who, albeit they were men worthy of all trust by reason of their especial holiness, did yet for the removal of all doubt swear a solemn oath, laying their hands on thrice holy things, that so it was, and that they had seen it. Moreover, some Cardinals, during the intimate intercourse that they held with the holy man, beheld them, and these composed truthful praises of the sacred stigmata, in prose,

and verse, and antiphons, which they published in his honour, giving their witness alike in word and in writing unto the truth. The Supreme Pontiff, moreover, the lord Alexander, whenas he was preaching in the presence of many Brethren, myself among them, declared that he, during the lifetime of the Saint, had beheld with his own eyes those sacred stigmata. At the time of his death, more than fifty Brethren beheld them, as did Clare, that virgin most devoted unto God, with the rest of her Sisters, and countless seculars, many of whom, as shall be told in its own place, both kissed them with devout emotion, and touched them with their hands, to confirm their witness.

Howbeit, the wound in his side he so heedfully concealed as that during his lifetime none might behold it, save by stealth. Thus one of the Brethren, who was wont solicitously to tend him,—having prevailed on him with holy caution to doff his habit that it might be shaken out,—by looking closely, beheld the wound, and moreover, by laying three fingers upon it with an hasty touch learnt the extent thereof alike by sight and by touch. With a like precaution the Brother that was then his Vicar beheld it. And a Brother of wondrous simplicity, that was his companion, while he was rubbing his shoulder-blades by reason of a pain and weakness that he suffered therein, put his hand within his hood, and by an accident let it fall on the sacred wound, inflicting great pain on him. Thenceforward he wore his undergarments so made as that they reached right unto his armpits, to cover the wound in the side. Moreover, the Brethren who washed these, or shook out his habit as occasion demanded, finding them stained with blood, by this manifest token arrived at an assured knowledge of the sacred wound, whose appearance, revealed thereafter at his death, they too, in company with very many others, gazed upon and venerated withal.

9. Up then, most valiant knight of Christ! Bear the armour of that most invincible Captain, equipped and adorned wherewith thou shalt overcome all enemies. Bear the standard of the King Most High, the which to look upon inspireth all the warriors of the host of God. Bear no less the seal of the Chief Priest, Christ, whereby thy words and deeds shall be deservedly received as blameless and authoritative by all men. For from henceforth, by reason of the marks of the Lord Jesus, which thou dost bear in thy body, let

no man trouble thee, nay rather, let whosoever is the servant of Christ be constrained unto deepest devotion and love for thee. For now by these most clear tokens,—proven, not by the two or three witnesses that be enough to establish a matter, but by a multitude, over and above what was necessary,—the witness of God in thee, and the things wrought through thee worthy of all belief, take from the infidels every pretext or excuse, while that they strengthen believers in faith, uplift them by confidence of hope, and kindle them with the fire of charity.

10. Now, verily, is that first vision fulfilled, which thou sawest, to wit, that thou shouldst become a captain in the warfare of Christ, and shouldst be accoutred with heavenly armour, marked with the sign of the Cross. Now that vision of the Crucified, that, at the outset of thy conversion, pierced thy soul with a sword of pitying sorrow, yea, and the sound of the Voice from the Cross, proceeding as though from the exalted throne of Christ and His hidden place of atonement,—as thou didst declare in thy holy converse,—are shewn to have been true beyond a doubt. Now, too, the Cross that, as thou madest progress in thy conversion, was seen of Brother Silvester marvellously coming forth from thy mouth,—the swords, too, that the holy Pacifico saw laid crosswise upon thee, piercing the heart,—and thine appearance uplifted in the air with arms outstretched after the manner of a Cross, while the holy Antony was preaching on the title of the Cross, as that angelic man, Monaldo, beheld;—these all are verily shewn and proven to have been seen, not in imaginations of the brain, but by revelation from heaven. Now, finally, that vision that was vouchsafed thee toward the end of thy life,—to wit, the exalted likeness of the Seraph, and the lowly Image of Christ shewn in one,—kindling thee inwardly and marking thee outwardly as another Angel ascending from the sunrising, having the seal of the Living God in thee,—giveth a confirmation of faith unto those visions aforesaid, and likewise receiveth from them a witness unto its own truth. Lo, by these seven appearances of the Cross of Christ in thee and about thee, marvellously set forth and shewn in order of time, thou hast attained, as though by six steps, unto that seventh, where thou dost make an end, and rest. For the Cross of Christ was at the outset of thy conversion both set before thee, and taken up by thee, and thenceforward as thou madest progress in thy conversion, it was unceasingly sustained by thee throughout

thy most holy life, and was shewn as an ensample unto others with such clearness and certainty that it demonstrateth that at the end thou didst arrive at the summit of Gospel perfection; thus none that is truly devout will reject this shewing-forth of Christ-like wisdom written in thy mortal dust, none that is a true believer will impeach it, none that is truly humble will lightly esteem it, seeing that it is verily set forth of God, and right worthy of all acceptation.

Chapter XIV

OF HIS SUFFERINGS AND DEATH

1. Francis, now crucified with Christ alike in flesh and in spirit, while glowing with seraphic love toward God, did also thirst, even as did Christ Crucified, for the multitudes of them that should be saved. Wherefore, being unable to walk by reason of the nails protruding from his feet, he caused himself to be borne round cities and castled villages, emaciated as he was, that he might incite others to bear the Cross of Christ. And unto the Brethren also he would say: “Let us begin, Brethren, to serve our Lord God, for until now we have made but little progress.” So mightily did he yearn to return unto the first beginnings of humility that he would serve the lepers as he had done at the outset, and would recall unto its early ministries his body that was now broken down by toils. Under Christ’s leadership, he was minded to do mighty deeds, and, albeit his limbs were waxing feeble, yet, strong and glowing in spirit, he hoped in this new contest to vanquish the foe. For there is no room for languor or sloth where the spur of love ever urgeth on unto greater things. Yet in him the flesh was so much in agreement with the spirit, and so ready to obey, as that when the spirit strove to attain unto perfect holiness, the flesh not only refrained from thwarting it, but did even hasten to forestall it.

2. Now in order that the merits of the man of God might be increased,—merits that of a truth do all find their consummation in endurance,—he began to suffer from divers ailments so grievously that scarce one of his limbs was free from pain and sore suffering. At length by divers sicknesses, prolonged and continuous, he was brought unto such a point that his flesh was wasted away, and only as it were the skin clave unto his bones. While he was afflicted by such grievous bodily suffering, he would call his pangs

not punishments, but sisters. And when once he was harassed more sorely than usual by sharp pains, a certain simple Brother said unto him: “Brother, pray the Lord that He deal more gently with thee, for meseemeth that His hand is laid more heavily on thee than is right.” Hearing this, the holy man groaned, and cried out, saying: “Did I not know the simple purity that is in thee, I would from henceforth have shunned thy company, for that thou hast dared to deem the divine counsels concerning me meet for blame.” And albeit he was wholly worn out by the long continuance of his grievous sickness, he cast himself on the ground, jarring his frail bones in the hard fall. And, kissing the ground, he cried: “I give Thee thanks, O Lord God, for all these my pains, and I beseech Thee, my Lord, that, if it please Thee, Thou wilt add unto them an hundredfold; for this will be most acceptable unto me if laying sorrow upon me Thou dost not spare, since the fulfilling of Thy holy will is unto me an overflowing solace.” Thus He seemed unto the Brethren like another Job, whose powers of mind increased even as his bodily weakness increased. But he himself knew long before his death when it should be, and, when the day of his departure was at hand, said unto the Brethren that he was about to put off the tabernacle of his body, even as it had been revealed unto him of Christ.

3. When, therefore, during the two years after the impression of the sacred stigmata, to wit, in the twentieth year from his conversion, he had been shaped by many trial blows of painful sicknesses, like unto a stone meet to be set in the building of the heavenly Jerusalem, and as it were an hammered work that under the mallet of manifold trials is brought unto perfection,—he asked to be borne unto Saint Mary of the Little Portion, that he might yield up the breath of life there, where he had received the breath of grace. When he had been brought thither,—that he might give an ensample of the truth that he had naught in common with the world,—in that most severe weakness that followed after all his sickness, he prostrated himself in fervour of spirit all naked on the naked earth, that in that last hour, wherein the foe might still rise up against him, he might wrestle in his nakedness with that naked spirit. As he lay thus on the ground, his habit of haircloth laid aside, he lifted his face, as was his wont, toward heaven, and, wholly absorbed in that glory, covered with his left hand the wound in his

right side, that it might not be seen, and said unto the Brethren: “I have done what was mine to do, may Christ teach you what is yours.”

4. While the companions of the Saint were weeping, stricken with keen pangs of pity, one of them, whom the man of God had said should be his Warden, knowing by divine inspiration his wish, rose in haste, and taking an habit, with the cord and breeches, brought it unto the little poor one of Christ, saying; “These I lend unto thee, as unto a beggar, and do thou receive them at the bidding of holy obedience.” At this the holy man rejoiced, and exulted in gladness of heart, for that he saw that he had kept faith with the Lady Poverty even unto the end, and raising his hands unto heaven, he glorified his Christ for that, freed from all burdens, he was going unhindered unto Him. For all this he had done in his zeal for poverty, being minded to possess not even an habit, unless it were lent him by another. He was verily minded in all things to be made like unto Christ Crucified, Who had hung on the Cross in poverty, and grief, and nakedness. Wherefore, as at the outset of his conversion he had stood naked before the Bishop, so in the ending of his life he was minded to quit the world naked. He charged the Brethren that stood around him, on their loving obedience, that when they saw that he was dead, they should leave him lying naked on the ground for so long time as a man would take leisurely to compass the distance of a thousand paces. O truly Christ-like man, who strove alike in life to imitate the life of Christ; in dying, His dying; in death, His death, by a perfect likeness, and was found worthy to be adorned with an outward likeness unto Him!

5. Then, as the hour of his departure was fast approaching, he made all the Brethren that were in the place be called unto him and, consoling them for his death with words of comfort, exhorted them with fatherly tenderness unto the love of God. He spake long of observing patience, and poverty, and fidelity unto the Holy Roman Church, placing the Holy Gospel before all other ordinances. Then as all the Brethren sat around him, he stretched his hands over them, crossing his arms in the likeness of the Cross, for that he did ever love that sign, and he blessed all the Brethren, present and absent alike, in the might and in the Name of the Crucified. He added moreover: “Be strong, all ye my sons, in the fear of the Lord, and abide therein for

ever. And, since temptation will come, and trials draw nigh, blessed are they who shall continue in the works that they have begun. I for my part make haste to go unto God, unto Whose grace I commend you all.” When he had made an end of gentle exhortations after this wise, this man most beloved of God asked them to bring him the book of the Gospels, and to read unto him from the Gospel according unto John, beginning at that place: “Before the feast of the Passover.” Then he himself, as best he could, brake forth into the words of that Psalm: “I cried unto the Lord with my voice, with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication,” and went through even unto the end, saying: “The righteous shall compass me about, for Thou shalt deal bountifully with me.”

6. At length, when all the mysteries had been fulfilled in him, and his most holy spirit was freed from the flesh, and absorbed into the boundless depths of the divine glory, the blessed man fell on sleep in the Lord. One of his Brethren and disciples saw that blessed soul, under the likeness of a star exceeding bright, borne on a dazzling cloudlet over many waters, mounting in a straight course unto heaven, as though it were radiant with the dazzling whiteness of his exalted sanctity, and filled with the riches of divine wisdom and grace alike, by the which the holy man was found worthy to enter the abode of light and peace, where with Christ he resteth for evermore. Moreover, a Brother named Augustine, who was then Minister of the Brethren in Terra di Lavoro, an holy and upright man, having come unto his last hour, and some time previously having lost the power of speech, in the hearing of them that stood by did on a sudden cry out and say: “Tarry for me. Father, tarry for me, lo, even now I am coming with thee!” When the Brethren asked and marvelled much unto whom he thus boldly spake, he made answer: “Did ye not see our Father, Francis, who goeth unto heaven”? And forthwith his holy soul, departing from the body, followed the most holy Father.

The Bishop of Assisi at that time had gone on pilgrimage unto the Oratory of Saint Michael on Monte Gargano, and unto him the Blessed Francis, appearing on the night of his departure, said: “Behold, I leave the world and go unto heaven.” The Bishop, then, rising at dawn, related unto his companions that which he had seen, and returned unto Assisi; there, when

he had made diligent enquiry, he learnt of a certainty that in that hour whereof the vision had notified him, the blessed Father had departed from this world.

At the hour of the passing of the holy man, the larks—birds that love the light, and dread the shades of twilight—flocked in great numbers unto the roof of the house, albeit the shades of night were then falling, and, wheeling round it for a long while with songs even gladder than their wont, offered their witness, alike gracious and manifest, unto the glory of the Saint, who had been wont to call them unto the divine praises.

Chapter XV

OF HIS CANONISATION, AND THE TRANSLATION OF HIS BODY

1. Francis, then, the servant and friend of the Most High, the founder and leader of the Order of Brothers Minor, the professor of poverty, the pattern of penitence, the herald of truth, the mirror of holiness, and ensample of all Gospel perfection,—the heavenly grace preventing him,—did make progress in ordered course from the depths unto the heights. This wondrous man, in poverty exceeding rich, in humility exalted, in mortification full of life, in simplicity wise, and in every grace of character noteworthy, whom in life the Lord had marvellously made illustrious, was made of Him in death incomparably more illustrious. For as that blessed man departed from this world, his holy spirit entered the eternal mansions and was made glorious by a full draught of the fountain of life, while he left set forth in his body certain tokens that were to be his glory, so that his most undefiled flesh, that had been crucified with its lusts, and had become a new creature, did both set forth the image of Christ's Passion by its unexampled distinction, and prefigure the semblance of the Resurrection by the newness of the miracle.

2. For in those blessed limbs were seen the nails marvellously fashioned out of his flesh by the divine might, and so implanted in that flesh that if they were pressed on one side they at once sprang back unto the other, like nerves that be joined together and taut. Moreover, there was manifestly seen in his body the scar of the wound in the side, nor inflicted nor wrought by man, but like unto the wounded side of the Saviour, the which, in Our Redeemer Himself, afforded us the holy mystery of man's redemption and

regeneration. The appearance of the nails was black like iron, but the wound in the side was ruddy, and by a contraction of the flesh shaped as it were into a circle, in appearance like a rose most fair. The rest of his flesh,—which aforetime both from his infirmities and from natural complexion had tended toward swarthinness,—now shone with a dazzling whiteness, and was a type of the beauty of its second state and royal apparel.

3. His limbs were so soft and pliant when touched as that they seemed to have returned unto the softness of childhood, and were seen to be adorned by divers clear tokens of innocence. Since, then, the nails shewed forth black on this most dazzlingly white flesh, and the wound in the side shewed ruddy as a rosy flower in Spring, it is no wonder that so fair and marvellous a contrast filled the beholders with gladness and marvelling. His sons were weeping for the loss of so lovable a Father, and yet they were filled with no small joy as they kissed the seals of the Most High King in him. The newness of the miracle changed mourning into exultation, and turned the examination of the reason into dumb amazement. Verily, this sight so unparalleled and so noteworthy was, unto all that beheld it, alike a confirmation of faith and an incitement unto love, while unto them that heard thereof it was a subject for marvelling, and the kindling of a yearning to behold it withal.

4. When the departure of the blessed Father became known, and the report of the miracle was spread abroad, the folk gathered in haste unto the spot, that with their bodily eyes they might behold that which should dispel all doubt from their reasons, and should add rejoicing unto their love. Accordingly, very many of the citizens of Assist were admitted to behold and to kiss those sacred stigmata. Now one among them, a learned and wise knight, Jerome by name, a man illustrious and renowned, having had doubts concerning these sacred tokens, and having been an unbeliever like Thomas,—did very eagerly and boldly, in the presence of the Brethren and of the other citizens, move the nails, and touch with his own hands the hands, feet, and side of the Saint; and thus it befell that, while touching those authentic marks of the wounds of Christ, he cut away every wound of unbelief from his own heart and the hearts of all. Wherefore he became thereafter a constant witness, among others, unto this truth that he had

learnt with such certainty, and confirmed it by an oath, laying his hands on thrice-holy things.

5. Now his Brethren and sons, that had been summoned for the passing of their Father, together with the entire assembly of the folk, devoted that night wherein Christ's dear Confessor had departed, unto divine praises, in such wise that they seemed no mourners for the dead, but a watch of Angels. When morning came, the crowds that had come together, carrying branches of trees and many wax lights, brought the holy body unto the city of Assisi, with hymns and chants. Moreover, they passed by the church of Saint Damian, where at that time that noble virgin Clare, now glorified in heaven, abode cloistered with her Sisters; and there for a space they stayed, and set down the holy body, adorned with those heavenly pearls, that it might be seen and embraced by those holy virgins. Coming at length with rejoicing unto the city, they laid the precious treasure that they were bearing in the church of Saint George, with all reverence. In that very place, Francis as a little boy had learned his letters, and there it was that he first preached in after days, and there, finally, he found his first resting-place.

6. Now the holy Father departed from the shipwreck of this world in the year 1226 of the Lord's Incarnation, on the fourth day of October, at late even of a Saturday, and on the Sunday he was buried.

At once the holy man began to shine in the glory of many and great miracles, the light of the divine countenance being uplifted upon him, so that the loftiness of his holiness that during his life, had been conspicuous in the world for the ruling of men's lives through its ensample of perfect uprightness, was, now that he himself was reigning with Christ, approved from heaven by miracles of divine power, so that belief might be thoroughly confirmed. And since in divers parts of the world the glorious marvels wrought by him, and the great blessings won through him, were kindling many unto devotion unto Christ, and inciting them unto veneration for the Saint himself,—so that men's tongues, as well as these deeds, were loud in his praise,—it came unto the ears of the Supreme Pontiff, the lord Gregory the Ninth, what great things God was working through His servant Francis.

7. Of a truth, that Shepherd of the Church had been fully assured of his marvellous holiness, not alone by hearing of the miracles wrought after his death, but also by proofs during his life of what he had seen with his own eyes, and handled with his own hands, and he had put perfect faith therein; so that, by reason of this, he now in no wise doubted but that Francis was glorified of the Lord in heaven. Wherefore, that he might act in accord with Christ, Whose Vicar he was, he was minded, with devout consideration, to make the Saint famous on earth, as one most worthy of all reverence. Moreover, to gain the fullest assurance throughout the whole world for the glorification of that most holy man, he caused the miracles that were known of him to be written and approved by trusty witnesses, and then examined by those of the Cardinals that seemed least favourable unto the business. When they had been diligently discussed and approved of all, with the unanimous counsel and consent of his Brethren, and of all the Prelates that were then in the Curia, he decreed that he should be canonised. Accordingly, he came in person unto the city of Assisi in the year of the Lord's Incarnation 1228, on the sixteenth day of July, a Sunday, and with rites exceeding solemn, that would take long to narrate, he enrolled the blessed Father in the list of the Saints.

8. Now in the year of the Lord 1230, the / Brethren assembled for a Chapter-General that was held at Assisi, and his body consecrated unto the Lord was translated unto the Church built in his honour on the twenty-fifth day of May. While that holy treasure, signed with the seal of the Most High King, was being removed. He Whose image it set forth deigned to work many miracles, that by the fragrance of its healing power the hearts of the faithful might be drawn to follow after Christ. Verily, it was right fitting that the blessed bones of him, whom God had made well-pleasing unto Him and beloved of Him in life, and whom He had carried unto heaven by the grace of contemplation, like Enoch, and had borne aloft into the sky in a fiery chariot, by his fervour of love, like Elias,—being now among the heavenly Spring flowers of the everlasting planting, should flourish out of their place with a marvellous fragrance.

9. Furthermore, even as that blessed man in life had been distinguished by marvellous tokens of virtue, so too from the day of his departure unto this

present time, he doth shine throughout the divers parts of the world in the light of famed marvels and miracles, the divine power glorifying him. For the blind and the deaf, the dumb and the lame, the dropsical and the paralysed, the possessed and the leper, the shipwrecked and the captive, have found succour by his merits, and in all diseases, needs, and perils he hath been an aid. But in that many dead have been miraculously raised through him, there is made manifest unto the faithful the glorious working of the power of the Most High, exalting His Saint, and His is the honour and glory throughout the endless ages of eternity. Amen.

HERE ENDETH THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED FRANCIS

CERTAIN MIRACLES WROUGHT AFTER
HIS DEATH

I

FIRST, CONCERNING THE POWERS OF THE SACRED STIGMATA.

1. To the honour and glory of Almighty God.

Forasmuch as I am about to narrate certain well-proven miracles wrought by the Blessed Francis after that he had been glorified in heaven, I deemed that it behoved me to make a beginning from that chief miracle wherein the might of the Cross of Jesus is set forth and its glory renewed. Francis, then, being made a new man, was distinguished by a new and astounding miracle, and was seen to be marked but by an unparalleled honour that had been granted unto no past age; to wit, he was adorned with the sacred stigmata, and conformed, in the body of this death, unto the Body of the Crucified. Whatsoever a mortal tongue might say concerning this, would fall short of its due praise. Of a truth, all the thoughts of the man of God, his public efforts and private meditations, were concerned with the Cross of the Lord; wherefore, that the sign of the Cross, the which from the beginning of his conversion had been imprinted on his heart, might outwardly be seen on his body, he sheltered himself within that Cross, taking unto him a penitent's habit made in fashion like a Cross. Thus, even as his mind within had put on the Crucified Lord, so his body too put on the armour of the Cross, that in that same sign whereby God had routed the powers of the air, the Lord's own army might wage His warfare. But from the very beginning of the time wherein he entered upon the warfare for the Crucified, divers mystic tokens of the Cross shone round about him, as becometh clearly evident unto one considering the story of his life, and how, by the sevenfold appearing of the Lord's Cross, he was wholly transformed into the likeness

of the Crucified, in thoughts, emotions, and deeds alike, by his rapturous love of Him. Wherefore the mercy of the Most High King, that doth stoop, beyond all mortal conception, unto such as love Him, meetly imprinted upon him the banner of His Cross, to bear in his body withal, so that he who had been endowed with such wondrous love of the Cross should be made a marvel by a wondrous token of honour of that Cross.

2. To confirm the unanswerable truth of this astounding miracle, there are enlisted not only the evidence of them that beheld and touched them—evidence in all ways worthy of belief—but also sundry marvellous visions and powers that after his death shone brightly forth to dispel all clouds from men’s minds. For ensample, the lord Pope Gregory the Ninth, of blessed memory—of whom the holy man had foretold in prophecy that he should be exalted unto the Apostolic See—before that he enrolled in the catalogue of Saints this standard-bearer of the Cross, felt some particles of doubt in his mind concerning the wound in the side. Then one night,—as that holy Bishop would relate with tears,—the Blessed Francis appeared unto him in a dream, shewing a stem countenance, and, blaming him for the doubts of his heart, raised his right arm, revealed the wound, and demanded of him a phial to receive the blood that welled up and flowed from his side. In his dream, the Supreme Pontiff proffered him the phial that he sought, and it appeared to be filled, even unto the brim, with the blood from his side. Thenceforward he began to be such a devout adherent of that holy miracle, and such a jealous and ardent champion thereof, as that he might in no wise brook that any man should dare, with arrogant attacks, to dim the glory of those radiant tokens, but would chastise such an one with stern reproofs.

3. A certain Brother Minor of the Order, whose ministry was preaching, and who had much influence by reason of his especial uprightness and good repute, had been fully convinced of the truth of the sacred stigmata. Howbeit, when with his finite judgement he sought within him a reason for this miracle, he began to be harassed by some scruples and doubts. When therefore for several days he had endured this conflict, his carnal nature gaining power, as he slept one night Saint Francis appeared unto him, his feet stained with mire, his mien humbly severe and patiently angered. “Now what,” saith he, “be these struggles and wavering opinions in thee? What be

these base doubts? Behold my hands and my feet.” Then he beheld the pierced hands, but saw not the stigmata on the feet that were covered with mire. “Wipe off,” saith he, “the mire from my feet, and recognise the place of the nails.” Then that other devoutly took hold on them, and seemed unto himself to wipe off the mire and to touch with his hands the places where the nails were. Forthwith, on waking up, he shed abundant tears, and washed away, by his floods of tears and by a public confession withal, those his former feelings that had been, as it were, all stained with mire. .

4. There was in the city of Rome a certain matron, noble alike for the excellence of her life and the distinction of her family, who had chosen Saint Francis for her patron, and had a picture of him painted in her secret chamber, wherein she was wont to pray unto the Father Which is in secret. Now on a certain day when she had devoted herself unto prayer, she was meditating upon the picture of the Saint and saw that it had not those sacred marks of the stigmata, whereupon she began to grieve and to wonder much. But it was no wonder that what the painter had left out should not be in the picture. Yet for many days she sought anxiously in her mind what might be the cause of this omission; when, lo, one day, on a sudden, there appeared in the picture those marvellous tokens, in fashion as they are wont to be painted in other pictures of the Saint. Trembling, she forthwith summoned her daughter, that was devoted unto God, asking her whether that picture had not hitherto been without the stigmata. She declared it was so, and affirmed on oath that aforetime it had shewn no stigmata, whereas now the stigmata might be seen upon it. Yet, forasmuch as men’s minds do oftentimes induce them to fall, and turn the truth into a matter for doubting, some evil hesitation entered once again the heart of the lady, whether perchance that picture had not been marked with those tokens from the first. But the power of God added yet a second miracle that the first might not be despised. For those marks did at once vanish, and the picture remained despoiled of the special honours, so that the earlier miracle was proven by that which followed it.

5. Moreover at Lerida, in Catalonia, it befell that a certain man, named John, who was devoted unto the Blessed Francis, was one evening passing along a certain street, wherein men were lying in ambush to slay, not him

indeed, for they bore him no enmity,—but a certain other who was like him to look upon and who was at the time in his company. One of them rushed out from the ambush, and, thinking him to be his foe, struck at him again and again, with such deadly blows as that there was no hope left for his recovery. For the first stroke inflicted upon him was within a little of cutting one shoulder clean off and the arm therewith, while another blow made such a gash under die breast as that the rush of air therefrom put out about six candles that were joined together. Accordingly, in the judgement of the physicians his cure was hopeless, all the more so as the wounds began to putrify, and gave forth such an intolerable odour as that even his wife was stricken with loathing, and he now seemed beyond the aid of any mortal remedies. Then he turned him to implore the succour of the Blessed Father Francis with utmost devoutness, yea, he had called upon him with all faith, and on the Blessed Virgin likewise even while the wounds were being dealt. And lo! as the ill-fated man lay abandoned on his couch of affliction, and, sleepless, oft called upon the name of Francis, and cried it aloud repeatedly, one stood by him in the habit of a Brother Minor, having entered,—so it seemed unto him,—by the window. And he, calling him by name, said: “Because thou hast had faith in me, lo! the Lord will deliver thee.” When the sick man asked of him who he was, he made answer that he was Francis, and, forthwith, approaching him, undid the bandages of his wounds, and, as it seemed, anointed them all with ointment. Then forthwith, as the sick man felt the gentle touch of those holy hands, mighty to heal by the power of the stigmata of the Saviour, the corruption was driven out, the flesh was restored, and the wounds closed, and he himself was restored unto his former perfect soundness. This done, the Blessed Father departed. Then the wounded .man, feeling himself healed, and gladly bursting forth into utterance of God’s praises and the praises of the Blessed Francis, called his wife. She ran thither with all speed, and, seeing him stand upright whom she had thought to have buried on the next day, was mightily astonished and adread, and made the whole place echo with her cries. Her household and friends gathered round in haste, and strove to lay her husband back on the bed, deeming him distraught, but he for his part strove with them, and declared and shewed that he was healed; whereupon they were dumb with astonishment, and were all as it were carried out of their wits, thinking that what they beheld was a phantom of the imagination. For he whom but a

little before they had beheld mangled with the cruellest wounds, and already all wasted away, they now saw in full health, and jubilant. And he who had been made whole said unto them: “Be not afeared, nor deem that which ye see to be an empty phantom, for Saint Francis hath but even now departed from this place, and by the touch of his holy hands he made me perfectly sound from all my wounds.” As the fame of this miracle increased, the whole folk hastened unto the place, and beholding in such an evident portent the power of the stigmata of the Blessed Francis, were filled alike with amazement and with rejoicing, and exalted the standard-bearer of Christ with great proclamations of his praises. In sooth, it was meet that the Blessed Father, then dead in the flesh but living with Christ, should by the wondrous apparition of his bodily form and by the gentle touch of his holy hands grant health unto a man. Mortally wounded, seeing that he had borne in his flesh the stigmata of Him Who in His mercy died, and miraculously rose again, that He might heal by the power of His stripes the human race that had been wounded and left half dead.

6. In Potenza, a city of Apulia, there was a certain cleric, Roger by name, an honour-worthy man, and a Canon of the Cathedral Church. He had been sore troubled by an infirmity, and on a day went into a church to pray; now there was therein a picture of the Blessed Francis, shewing the glorious stigmata, and he began to doubt concerning that exalted miracle, deeming it a thing unheard-of and impossible. Now on a sudden, as with impaired judgement he was inwardly revolving these idle thoughts, he felt himself forcibly stricken in the palm of his left hand under his glove, and heard, a whizzing sound, as when a dart is hurled from a mangonel, and at once, alike wounded by the blow and astonied at the sound, he drew his glove from off his hand, that he might see with his eyes that which he had already perceived by touch and sound. And, albeit there had been afore no wound in his palm, he beheld in the middle of the palm a wound like unto that inflicted by the stroke of an arrow, wherefrom there proceeded such burning heat as that he seemed like to faint by reason thereof. Wondrous to relate, there was no trace of injury to be seen on his glove, so that the penalty of the hidden wound inflicted upon him corresponded unto the hidden wound in his heart. Then for the space of two days he cried aloud and groaned, pricked by intensest pain, and drew off the veil from his heart’s doubts, for

all to see. And he declared and solemnly sware that he truly believed that Saint Francis had received the sacred stigmata, asserting that all the vain imaginings of doubt had left him. And, as a suppliant, he prayed the Saint of God by the sacred stigmata to succour him, and enriched his abundant heartfelt prayers with abundant floods of tears. Then befell a sure miracle. As he laid aside his unbelief, the healing of his mind was followed by the healing of his body. All his pain was soothed, the burning was cooled, and no trace of the wound remained, and thus it befell that the hidden sickness of the mind was, by the providence of the divine mercy, healed through the evident burning of the flesh, and, as the mind was healed, the flesh itself was healed together with it. The man became humble, devoted unto God, and bound by ties of constant intimacy unto the Saint and the Order of the Brethren. The solemn miracle of this affair was attested on oath, and the knowledge thereof was handed down unto us in letters confirmed by the authority of the Bishop's seal.

Accordingly, there is no room for doubt concerning the sacred stigmata, nor in this matter let any man's eye be evil because God is good, as though the bestowal of such a gift were not in accord with His everlasting goodness. For if, by that seraphic love, many members clave unto the Head, that is, Christ,—so that in the warfare, clad in like armour, they were found worthy, and in the kingdom were exalted unto a like glory,—none that is of sound mind will deny that this pertaineth unto the glory of Christ, and unto that alone.

II

OF THE DEAD THAT WERE RAISED

1. In the town of Monte Marano, near Benevento, a certain woman that had an especial devotion unto Saint Francis went the way of all flesh. Now, when the clergy had come together at night to perform the funeral rites, and vigils, and to chant the Psalms, on a sudden, in the sight-of all, that woman rose up upon the bier, and called one of the priests that stood by, who was her confessor, saying: "I am fain to confess, Father; hear my sin. I, when dead, was delivered over to be straitly imprisoned, for that I had never made confession of the sin that I will now disclose unto thee. But, (saith she), by the prayers offered for me by Saint Francis, whom, while I lived, I served with a devout mind, it hath now been vouchsafed me to return unto the body, to the end that, having revealed that sin, I may merit everlasting life. And lo! yourselves shall see how that, after I have disclosed the same, I shall hasten unto the promised rest." Trembling, then, she confessed unto the trembling priest, and, after receiving absolution, laid herself quietly down on the bier, and in blessed wise fell on sleep in the Lord.

2. In the town of Pamarco, that is set among the mountains of Apulia, a father and mother had one only daughter, of tender age, and tenderly beloved beyond all else. And she was brought unto death by a grievous sickness, and her parents, having no hope of another child to take her place, deemed themselves as dead when she died. Their kinsfolk and friends gathered together for this right piteous burial, but the ill-fated mother lay filled with woe unspeakable, and wrapt in her supreme sorrow, so that she perceived no whit of aught that befell. Meanwhile Saint Francis, accompanied by but one other, appeared, and deigned to visit the desolate woman, whom he knew had been devoted unto him, and addressed her with

kindly words: “Weep not,” saith he, “for the light of thy lamp, whose quenching thou bewailest, shall be restored unto thee by my prayers.” Forthwith the woman arose, and, revealing unto all that which the Saint had said unto her, would not suffer the dead, body to be borne forth; but, calling on the name of Saint Francis with great faith, and laying hold on her dead daughter, she raised her up, alive and sound, while all looked on and marvelled.

3. The Brethren at Nocera once begged the loan of a certain cart, whereof they stood somewhat in need, from a man named Peter, but he, after the manner of a fool, answered them with abuse instead of with the help they sought, and in place of the alms craved in honour of Saint Francis, blasphemed his name. At once, the man repented him of his foolishness, for the fear of God came upon him, lest, perchance the vengeance of the Lord might follow, even as it did speedily follow. For forthwith his firstborn son fell sick, and, after a short space, gave up the ghost. The unhappy father rolled on the ground, and called without ceasing on Francis, the Saint of God, crying with tears: “It is I who sinned, it is I who spake in evil wise, thou oughtest to scourge me in mine own person. O Saint, restore unto me, that am now penitent, that which thou didst take from me when I wickedly blasphemed. I give myself unto thee, I offer myself for ever unto thy service, for I will ever offer unto Christ a devout sacrifice of praise for the honour of thy name.” O marvel! At these words, the boy arose, and, forbidding his mourning, declared that as he died, and had left the body, by the Blessed Francis he had been brought back and restored.

4. A certain notary in the city of Rome had a little son scarce seven years old, who once, when his mother was going unto the church of Saint Mark, was fain, as children be, to go with her; when he was bidden by his mother to tarry at home, he threw himself from a window of the palace, and, his bones broken by the final concussion, breathed his last on the spot. His mother, who had not yet gone far, at the sound of a fall feared it might be that of her child, and returned with all speed; then, when she found her son thus suddenly taken from her by this pitiable accident, she forthwith began to lay vengeful hands upon herself, and with woeful cries roused the whole neighbourhood to mourn with her. Then a certain Brother, named Ralph, of

the Order of Minors, who had come thither to preach, drew nigh the child and, full of faith, said unto the father: “Dost thou believe that Francis, the Saint of God, can avail to raise up thy son from the dead, by the love that he ever had for Christ Who was crucified to restore life unto men?” When he made answer that he firmly believed and faithfully confessed it, and would be for evermore a servant of the Saint if by his merits he might be found meet to receive from God so great a benefit,—that Brother prostrated himself in prayer, together with the Brother that was his companion, stirring up the rest that were present unto prayer. This done, the boy began to gape a little and, opening his eyes and stretching his arms, raised himself, and at once, in the presence of all, walked, whole and sound, restored by the wondrous might of the Saint unto life and health at the same time.

5. In the city of Capua, while a boy was playing with many others, on the bank of the river Voltorno, he heedlessly fell into deep water, and the rushing river swiftly engulfed him, and buried him, dead, beneath its sand. At the shouts of the other boys, who had been playing with him nigh the river, a great crowd of people gathered together there. The whole multitude invoked, with devout supplication, the merits of the Blessed Francis, that he would behold the faith of his parents that had a devotion for him, and would deign to snatch their offspring from the peril of death; then lo! a certain man that had been standing afar off, hearing their shouts, came up, and he was a swimmer. After a long search, at length, calling upon the help of the Blessed Francis, he found the place wherein the river slime had formed as it were a tomb for the child’s body, the which he dug out and drew therefrom, and, to his sorrow, saw that he was dead. But the folk that stood round, albeit they saw the child was dead, did nevertheless, weeping and crying aloud, exclaim: “O Saint Francis, restore the boy unto his father!” Yea, even some Jews that had come up, moved by natural compassion, cried: “O Saint Francis, restore the boy unto his father!” On a sudden, the boy, to the wonder and delight of all, rose up unscathed, and begged and implored that he might be taken unto the Church of the Blessed Francis, that he might devoutly pay his thanks unto him by whose might he knew that he had been miraculously raised up.

6. In the city of Sessa, in the district that is called “At the Columns,” a house suddenly fell, and buried a youth, killing him on the spot. Men and women ran together from all sides, agitated by the sound of the fall; they cleared away from one place and another the beams and stones, and brought unto his ill-fated mother her dead son. Then she, choked with bitterest sobs, cried, as best she might, in piteous tones: “O Saint Francis, Saint Francis, restore unto me my son!” And not she only, but all that were present, besought the protection of the blessed Father. Yet, as there was neither voice nor sense in the body, they laid it upon a bier, intending to bury it on the morrow. Howbeit, the mother had confidence in the Lord by the merits of His Saint, and made a vow that she would cover the altar of the Blessed Francis with a new linen cloth, if he would recall her son to life for her. And lo! about midnight the youth began to gape, his members waxed warm, and he rose up alive and well, and brake forth into praises. Yea more, he incited the clergy who had assembled together, and the whole folk, to pay lauds and thanks unto God and unto the Blessed Francis, with glad minds.

7. A certain youth, named Gerlandino, a native of Ragusa, went forth in the vintage season unto the vineyards, and placed himself in the wine vat under the wine-press, to fill his skin bottles. On a sudden, some immense stones,—the wooden supports collapsing,—crashed upon his head with a deadly blow. At once his father hastened unto his son, and, in his despair, succoured him not as he lay encumbered, but left him under the load even as it had fallen upon him. The vinedressers ran together right speedily as they heard the woeful utterance of his loud cries, and, like the father of the boy, were filled with great sorrow, and drew forth the youth, already dead, from the ruin. But his father, falling at the feet of Jesus, humbly prayed that, by the merits of Saint Francis, whose feast-day was then at hand, He would deign to restore unto him his only son. He continued to sigh forth prayers, and to vow to perform many pious ministries, and promised to visit the tomb of the holy man, together with his son, if he were raised from the dead. Then a sure miracle befell. For forthwith the boy, whose whole body had been crushed, was restored unto life and sound health, and stood up rejoicing before them all, reproving them that mourned, and declaring that by the intercession of Saint Francis he had been restored unto life.

8. In Germany, he raised up another dead man, concerning whom the lord Pope Gregory,—at the time of the translation of the Saint's body,—by Apostolic letters assured and gladdened all the Brethren, that had gathered together for the translation and the Chapter. The manner of that miracle I have not related, being ignorant thereof and deeming the Papal attestation to be better than the record of all other assertions.

III

OF THEM THAT HE DELIVERED FROM THE PERIL OF DEATH

1. In the outskirts of Rome, there was a nobleman named Rudolph, whose wife was devoted unto God and oft received as her guests the Brothers Minor, alike from the virtue of hospitality, and from her veneration and love for the Blessed Francis. One night, the warder of the castle, who slept on the topmost tower, was lying upon an heap of wood that had been placed on the very edge of the wall, and, their fastenings becoming undone, fell on to the palace roof, and thence on to the ground. At the sound of the fall, the whole household was aroused, and, when they heard of the warder's fall, the lord and lady of the castle hastened unto the spot, with the Brethren. He, indeed, who had fallen from the height, was wrapt in so deep a sleep as that he was awakened neither by the continued falling of the beams, nor by the tumult of the household that ran together with shouts. At last he was roused by their hands dragging and pushing him, whereupon he began to complain that they had cut him off from a sweet repose, declaring that he had been sleeping sweetly in the arms of the Blessed Francis. When he had been instructed of others concerning his own fall, and saw himself on the ground, whereas he had lain on the topmost tower, he was astounded that that had befallen him which he had no whit perceived, and promised, in the presence of all, that he would become a penitent by reason of his reverence for God and for the Blessed Francis.

2. In the town of Pofi, that is situated in Campania, a certain priest named Thomas approached the mill of the church that he might repair it. But as he walked heedlessly along the bank of the canal, where a deep whirlpool was

flowing with a great inrush of water, he fell suddenly, and was entangled in the nail-studded wheel, whose motion turned the mill. He lay thus encumbered with the wood, and the rush of drowning the waters fell on his face, as he was prostrate, so that he could not cry aloud, howbeit, in his heart, he piteously called upon Saint Francis. Thus for a long space he lay there, and his companions, having now utterly despaired of his life, turned the mill forcibly in the opposite direction, and the priest, thus cast forth, was hurled about, gasping, in the flood of water. And lo! a certain Brother Minor, clad in a white tunic and girt with a rope, with great gentleness took him by the arm, and drew him forth from the river, saying: "I am Francis, upon whom thou hast called." Then he, thus delivered, was greatly astonished, and would fain have kissed his footprints, and ran hither and thither in his anxiety, enquiring of his companions: "Where is he? Whither hath the Saint departed? Which way took he?" But they, trembling, fell prostrate on the ground, exalting the glorious marvels of the great God, and the virtues and merits of His humble servant.

3. Certain youths of Borgo di Celano went forth into some fields to cut hay; now in these fields there was hidden an ancient well, whose mouth was overshadowed by green grasses, and it held water to a depth of about four paces. As the youths separated, and went singly about the meadow, one of them fell by accident into the well. The deep pit swallowed his body, but his spirit and mind rose on high to seek the intercession of the Blessed Francis, and, even as he fell, he cried with faith and trust: "Saint Francis, aid me!" The others went hither and thither, as the lad was not to be found, seeking him with shouts, and tears, and searching all round. Discovering at length that he had fallen into the well, they returned in haste unto Borgo, with lamentations, to tell what had befallen and to seek for help. But as they returned, bringing with them a great crowd of men, one of whom they let down by a rope into the well, they beheld the lad sitting on the surface of the water, having suffered no injury whatsoever. When he had been drawn forth from the well, the youth said unto all that stood by: "As I fell of a sudden, I invoked the protection of the Blessed Francis, and he at once, even as I fell, stood by me in bodily presence, and, stretching out his hand, gently laid hold on me, nor ever left me until, you also aiding, he drew me forth from the well."

4. In the church of the Blessed Francis, at Assisi, the lord Bishop of Ostia, —he that was afterward the Chief Pontiff, Alexander,—was preaching in the presence of the Roman Curia, when an heavy and great stone, that had been left through negligence over the lofty stone pulpit, was pushed out of place by excessive pressure, and fell on the head of a certain woman. As all the bystanders deemed her already quite dead, and that her head had been quite shattered, they covered her with the cloak that she was wearing, so that, the sermon ended, her pitiable body might be borne forth from the church. Howbeit, the woman had committed herself in faith unto the Blessed Francis, before whose altar she lay. And lo! the preaching ended, she rose up in the presence of all so sound as that no trace of injury from might be seen upon her. Yea, what is more marvellous, she having for a long time past until that very hour suffered from an almost incessant headache, was from thence utterly freed from trouble of any disease, as she herself afterward bare witness.

5. At Corneto, at the founding of a bell in the place of the Brethren, certain devout men had come together, and a boy of eight years, named Bartholomew, was bringing a gift for the Brethren that were at work. Lo! on a sudden a strong wind arose, and shook the house, so that the great, heavy door in the gateway fell upon the little boy with such a mighty crash as that all believed one on whom such an immense weight had fallen must needs be crushed by the deadly concussion. For he lay so completely buried beneath the fallen weight as that nothing of him could be seen from without. All the bystanders ran unto the spot, invoking the powerful right hand of the Blessed Francis. Yea, his father too, whose limbs had become stiff so that he was unable to stir for grief, committed his son with prayers and cries unto Saint Francis. At length the deadly weight was raised from above the boy, and behold, he whom they had believed to be dead, was seen rejoicing, as though roused from sleep, and with no trace of any injury upon him. Accordingly, when he was fourteen years of age, he became a Brother Minor, and was afterward a learned and renowned preacher in the Order.

6. The men of Lentino had quarried from the mountain an immense stone, that was to be laid upon the altar in a church of the Blessed Francis that was then about to be consecrated. Now about forty men were striving to place

the stone on a cart, and, while they were putting forth their strength again and again, the stone fell upon one man, and buried him as in a tomb. Perturbed in mind, and knowing not what to do, the greater part of the men departed in despair. Howbeit, ten remained, and they with lamentable cries called upon Saint Francis, imploring him not to suffer a man to meet with such an horrible death while in his service; and at last, regaining courage, they removed the stone with such ease as that none could doubt the power of Francis had come unto their aid. The man rose up sound in all his limbs, and had, moreover, recovered the clear sight of his eyes, that had been dim afore, so that thus it might be given unto all to know of what mighty efficacy are the merits of the Blessed Francis in cases beyond hope.

7. A like thing befell at San Severino in the March of Ancona. Whileas an immense stone, that had been brought from Constantinople for the church of the Blessed Francis, was being dragged along by the strength of many, it slipped on a sudden, and fell upon one of them that were dragging it. Albeit he was believed to be not only dead, but also utterly ground to pieces, nevertheless, the Blessed Francis coming unto his aid and raising the stone, he leapt forth from the weight of the stone that had lain upon him well and sound, free from all injury.

8. A citizen of Gaeta, named Bartholomew, had toiled much in the building of a certain church of the Blessed Francis, when a beam, that had not been firmly fixed, fell crashing on his head, and sorely injuring him. Feeling that death was coming upon him, and being a man faithful and religious, he besought the Last Sacrament from a Brother. The Brother, deeming him about to die, lest he might not be able to bring It in time, set before him the words of the Blessed Augustine, saying unto Him: "Believe, and thou hast eaten." On the following night, the Blessed Francis appeared unto him with eleven Brethren, carrying a lamb in his bosom, and approached his couch, and called him by name, saying: "Bartholomew, fear not, for the enemy shall not prevail against thee, who was minded to hinder thee in my service. This is the Lamb, Whom thou didst ask to be given unto thee, and Whom by reason of thy good desire thou hast received, by Whose might moreover thou shalt gain health of both the inner and the outer man." With these words, he laid his hands upon the wounds, and bade him return unto the

work that he had begun. The man, rising very early in the morning, appeared unscathed and rejoicing unto those who had left him half dead, filling them with marvel and amaze, and thus he stirred up their minds, alike by his own ensample, and the miracle wrote by the Saint, unto veneration and love for the blessed Father.

9. A man named Nicholas, of the town of Ceperano, fell on a day into the hands of his cruel enemies. They, with brutal ferocity, inflicted wound upon wound upon him, not ceasing to rage against the ill-fated man until they deemed him either dead, or on the point of death. Howbeit, this Nicholas had cried with a loud voice, so soon as the first wounds were dealt him, "Saint Francis, succour me! Saint Francis, aid me! "Many folk at a distance heard these cries, albeit they were not able to bring him succour. At length he was carried home, all covered with his own blood, howbeit, he confidently maintained that he should not see death by reason of those wounds, and that he even felt no pain therefrom, forasmuch as that Saint Francis had succoured him, and had obtained from the Lord that he might show his repentance. That which ensued confirmed his words, for, when the blood was washed off, he stood up forthwith unscathed, contrary unto all men's expectation.

10. The son of a nobleman in the town of San Gimignano was labouring under a sore sickness, and, despairing of ever regaining his health, was brought down unto extremities. For there flowed from his eyes a stream of blood, such as is wont to gush forth when a vein in the arm is cut, and, as other sure signs of approaching death were seen in the rest of his body, he was given up for dead, nay more, as through weakness of spirit and of vital force he had lost the power of feeling and of movement, he seemed to have already quitted the body. Yet, while his kinsfolk and friends were assembling together to bewail him, as is the custom, and were treating only of his burial, his father, who trusted in the Lord, ran with hurried steps unto the church of the Blessed Francis in that town, put a rope round his neck, and threw himself on the ground in the deepest humility; lying thus, he vowed vows and offered up many prayers, and merited by his sighs and groanings to have Saint Francis as his advocate with Christ. Then the father

returned at once unto his son, and, finding him restored unto health, changed his mourning into rejoicing.

11. A like miracle was wrought of the Lord, by the merits of His Saint, on a damsel in a town of Catalonia, called Tamarid, and on another in Ancona; these twain were through exceeding sore sickness nigh their last breath, when the Blessed Francis, who had been invoked with faith by their parents, restored them forthwith unto entire health.

12. A clerk at Vico Bianco, Matthew by name, having drunk of a deadly poison, was so weighed down thereby as that he lost all power of speech, and could but await his last end. A priest exhorted him to confess unto him, but could not avail to wring one word from him. Nevertheless, in his heart he was humbly beseeching Christ that, through the merits of the Blessed Francis, He would deign to snatch him from the jaws of death, and speedily, as,—strengthened by the Lord,—he uttered the name of the Blessed Francis with faith and devotion, he vomited forth the poison, as they who were present bear witness, and returned thanks unto his deliverer.

IV

OF THEM THAT WERE SAVED FROM SHIPWRECK

1. Some sailors were exposed unto great peril of the sea, when,—they being about ten miles distant from the port of Barletta,—an exceeding great storm arose, and they, already doubting of their lives, let down the anchors. But as the sea swelled ever more fiercely under the blasts of the storm, the ropes were broken and the anchors left behind, and they themselves were driven hither and thither over the waters in a doubtful and wavering course. At length, by the divine will the sea was calmed, and they made ready to use all efforts to regain the anchors, the ropes whereof were floating on the top of the water. And since they could not compass it in their own strength, they invoked the aid of many Saints, and were worn out with toil and sweat, howbeit, at the end of a whole day they had not regained a single one. Now there was a certain sailor, whose name was Perfetto, but whose way of life was far from perfect, and he, in mocking fashion, said unto his companions: “Look now, ye have invoked the aid of all the Saints, and as ye see, there is not one that will succour ye. Let us invoke this Francis, who is a new Saint, perchance he will dive into the sea in some wise, and restore us our lost anchors!” The rest agreed unto the advice of Perfetto, not in mockery, but in earnest, and, reproving him for his derisive words, made a freewill vow unto the Saint, and confirmed the same; at once, in a moment, without any implement, the anchors floated on the top of the water, as though the properties of the iron had been turned into the buoyancy of wood.

2. A pilgrim, weak in body by reason of a very sharp attack of fever, wherefrom he had lately suffered, was carried on board a ship, and voyaged

from the parts beyond the sea. He too cherished an especial feeling of devotion for the Blessed Francis, and had chosen him as his advocate with the Heavenly King. Now he, being not yet entirely recovered of his sickness, was tormented by a burning thirst, and, as water was then failing them, he began to cry with a loud voice: "Go with faith, pour out a cup for me, for that the Blessed Francis hath filled my little vessel with water!" O wonder! They found the vessel full of water, though it had been afore left empty. On another day, a storm arose, and the ship was covered with the waves, and shaken by the violence of the hurricanes, so that all now feared shipwreck; then this same feeble man began, with sudden cries, to make his voice echo throughout the ship: "Arise, all of ye," saith he, "and meet the Blessed Francis, who is coming hither. Lo, he is at hand to save us!" Thus with loud cries and many tears, he fell on his face, and adored him. At once, at the appearance of the Saint, the sick man regained his entire health, and there followed a great calm of the sea.

3. Brother James of Rieti, when with some other Brethren he was crossing a river in a small boat, and had first landed his companions on the bank, was making ready to disembark after them. But by a mischance that little boat upset, and, while the steersman swam, the Brother was plunged into the deep water. The Brethren that were set ashore invoked the Blessed Francis with loving entreaty, and with tears and sighs implored him to succour his son. The Brother too, that was plunged in the middle of an exceeding great whirlpool, since he could not cry with his voice, cried from his heart, with all his might, beseeching the aid of the holy Father. And lo! the blessed Father coming unto his aid in bodily form, he walked through the deep as though on dry land, and, laying hold on the capsized boat, came with it unto the shore. Wondrous to relate, his clothes were not soaked, no, nor had a drop of water come nigh his habit.

4. A Brother named Bonaventura, while crossing a certain lake with two men, had his boat broken in twain by the force of the rushing water, and was plunged into deep water, together with his companions, and the boat. But when from the deep waters of their distress they invoked with all confidence their merciful Father, Francis, on a sudden the boat, all

swamped with water, floated to the surface, and, carrying them, came safe unto port, under the guidance of the Saint.

In like manner also, a Brother of Ascoli, who had been plunged into a river, came forth delivered by the merits of Saint Francis.

Moreover, on the lake of Rieti, certain men and women that were exposed unto a like peril, by calling upon the name of Saint Francis, safely escaped a dangerous shipwreck in the midst of the waters.

5. Some sailors of Ancona, tossed by a perilous tempest, saw themselves in danger of drowning. When, despairing of their life, they called upon Saint Francis in suppliant fashion, a great light appeared in the boat, and with that light a calm from heaven was granted them, as if the holy man could by his wondrous power command the winds and the sea. But I think that it is in no wise possible to relate one by one the many portents and miracles whereby our blessed Father hath been glorified, and is glorified, on the sea, nor the many times that he hath brought help unto them that were in despair. Nor is it strange that unto him, now reigning in heaven, there should be granted power over the waves, seeing that while he abode in this mortal state all created things, transfigured into their first image, did him service in marvelous wise.

V

OF THEM THAT HE SET FREE FROM BONDS AND IMPRISONMENT

1. It befell a Greek in Romania, that was in the service of a certain lord, to be falsely accused of theft, wherefore the lord of the land bade him be shut up in a narrow prison, and heavily fettered. But the lady of the house, pitying the servant, and believing of a surety that he was free from the guilt imputed unto him, entreated her husband with devout and importunate prayers to set him free. Then, as her husband, in his obstinate harshness, would not agree thereunto, the lady had recourse as a suppliant unto Saint Francis, and in prayer committed the innocent man unto his goodness. Forthwith that succourer of the unhappy shewed himself ready, and in his mercy visited the captive. He undid his bonds, brake open the prison, and, laying his hands on the innocent man, led him forth, saying: "I am he unto whom thy lady hath devoutly commended thee." As he was seized by mighty dread, and was skirting an abyss as a descent from the lofty cliff, on a sudden, by the power of his deliverer, he found himself on the flat ground. Then he returned unto his mistress, and by his narration of the true happening of the miracle, kindled a yet more glowing love and veneration for Christ and His servant Francis in the devout lady.

2. In Massa, a certain poor man owed a great sum of money unto a knight of Saint Peter. Having no means to pay it withal by reason of his destitution, the debtor was arrested by the knight that sought his money back, and prayed him in suppliant wise to take pity on him, entreating a respite for the love of the Blessed Francis. But the haughty knight spurned the prayers he made, and in his vain judgement esteemed the love of the Saint lightly, as if

it were a vain thing. For he made obstinate reply, saying, “I will shut thee up in such a place, and such a dungeon, as that neither Francis nor any other shall be able to succour thee.” And he essayed to do what he had said. He found a dark dungeon, wherein he threw the man, fettered. But shortly after there stood by him the Blessed Francis, who, breaking open the prison, and loosing his chains, led forth the man, unscathed, unto his own abode. Thus the strong power of Francis, spoiling of his prey the haughty knight, set free from his evil case the captive who had committed himself unto him, and changed the knight’s arrogance into gentleness by a marvellous miracle.

3. Albert of Arezzo was held in strictest confinement for debts unjustly demanded of him, and did humbly commit his innocence unto Saint Francis. He had an especial love for the Order of Brothers Minor, and among the Saints honoured Saint Francis with supreme veneration. His creditor said in blasphemy that neither Francis nor God could deliver him from his hands. Now it befell on the Vigil of Saint Francis, when the captive had taken no food, but for love of the Saint had bestowed his meal on a poor man, as night came on, Saint Francis appeared unto him as he kept the Vigil. At his entrance, the fetters fell from his feet, and the chains from his hands, the doors were opened of themselves, the boards of the roof sprang apart, and the man went forth free, returning unto his own house. Thenceforward he performed a vow, fasting on the Vigil of the Blessed Francis, and adding an ounce yearly unto the wax candle that he was wont yearly to offer, as a token of his increasing devotion.

4. While that the lord Pope Gregory the Ninth was sitting in the seat of the Blessed Peter, a certain man named Peter, of the city of Alesia, was accused of heresy, taken prisoner at Rome, and, at the bidding of that same Pontiff, handed over unto the safekeeping of the Bishop of Tivoli. The Bishop received him under pain of forfeiting his see did he escape, and bound him with fetters, and caused him to be shut up in a dark prison, lest he should escape, making him eat bread by weight and drink water by measure. But the man began to call upon the Blessed Francis to have compassion on him, praying and weeping much, and all the more inasmuch as he had heard that the Vigil of his Feast was then at hand. And because with sincere faith he had abjured all the errors of heretical frowardness, and with all the devotion

of his heart was cleaving unto Francis, that most faithful servant of Christ, by the intercession of his merits, he gained an answer from the Lord. For, as the night of his Feast came on, about twilight, the Blessed Francis in his pity came down into the prison, and, calling the captive by name, bade him quickly arise. He, mightily afeared, asked who he was, and was told that it was the Blessed Francis who stood by him. Then by the power of the presence of the holy man he saw that the chains had fallen from his feet, broken, and that the rafters of the prison were opened by the nails therein springing forth of themselves, and that an open passage was afforded him for going forth; howbeit, all trembling and stricken dumb as he was, he knew not how to escape, but cried aloud in the doorway, and filled all the gaolers with fear. When they had related unto the Bishop that he was loosed from his bonds, and had informed the prelate of the manner of its happening, he came thither out of devotion, and, clearly perceiving the power of God, worshipped the Lord on the spot. The chains, moreover, were carried before the lord Pope and the Cardinals, and they, seeing what had come to pass, were filled with great amaze, and blessed God.

5. Guidolotto of San Gimignano was falsely charged with having poisoned a certain man, and with having purposed to slay in like manner the dead man's son and his whole house. Forthwith he was arrested by the Podesta of the district, loaded with exceeding heavy chains, and shut up in a certain tower. But he, having confidence in the Lord by reason of his innocence, whereof he was assured, commended his cause unto the advocacy of the Blessed Francis, that he might defend it. Now while the Podesta was revolving in his mind in what manner he might wring from him by torture a confession of the crime wherewith he was charged, and by what punishment, after his confession, he should put him to death,—lo, on that same night, when next morning he was to be led out to the torture, he was visited by Saint Francis in bodily form, and was wrapt round until morning by a great flood of light, and was filled with joy, and great confidence, and received a full assurance of his escape. At morn, the torturers came, and took him from the prison, and bound him on the rack, loading him with great iron weights. Many times he was lowered and then again raised, so that, one torture following on another, he might the more quickly be compelled to confess to the charge. But he was ever of a glad countenance,

in the innocency of his spirit, and shewed no suffering amid these torments. Then a great fire was kindled beneath him, howbeit, not a hair was injured, though he was hanging head downwards. Finally, boiling oil was poured over him, but, by the power of the Advocate unto whom he had entrusted his defence, he vanquished all these trials, and was accordingly set free, and departed unscathed.

VI

OF THEM THAT WERE DELIVERED FROM THE PERILS OF CHILDBIRTH

1. A certain Countess in Slavonia, as zealous for righteousness as she was distinguished by her noble birth, glowed with devotion toward Saint Francis, and toward his Brethren with a watchful beneficence. Now, being in childbed, she was of wrung by bitter pangs, and brought unto such terrible straits as that it seemed the birth of the child must be the death of the mother. It seemed that the child could not draw breath unless she breathed her last, and that such throes must portend not birth, but death. Then she bethought her of the fame of Saint Francis, of his power, and his glory; her faith was aroused, and her devotion enkindled. She turned her unto that sure help, that faithful friend, that comforter of the devout, that refuge of the sorrowing, saying: "O Saint Francis, all my bones implore thy goodness, and in my mind I make the vows that I cannot speak aloud." 'Twas marvellous how swiftly his goodness succoured her! The end of her prayer was the end of her pangs, the goal of her labour, the beginning of her delivery. For at once all her distress ceased, and she brought forth the child in safety. Nor was she unmindful of her vow, nor did she draw back from her intent. For she made be built a fair church and, when built, handed it over unto the Brethren in honour of the Saint.

2. In the countryside round Rome, a certain woman named Beatrice, that was nigh her delivery, had borne for four days the babe, dead, in her womb, and, hapless one, was driven unto great straits and tormented by deadly throes. The dead babe was bringing the mother nigh death, and the untimely offspring that had not yet seen the light was seen of all to be imperilling the

mother. The physicians essayed to render aid, but all mortal remedies were but vain. Thus a very heavy share of our first mother's curse fell upon this unhappy woman, who, being made a tomb for her unborn child, must needs await her own burying speedily and surely. Yet she commended herself, by messengers, with entire devotion, unto the Brothers Minor, and as a suppliant begged for some relic of Saint Francis, with full faith. It chanced by the divine ruling that they found a fragment of the cord wherewith the Saint was sometime girded. At once, as the cord was laid on the sufferer, all her pain was stayed right easily, and she was delivered of the dead babe, that was causing her death, and restored unto her former health.

3. The wife of a certain nobleman of Carvio, Juliana by name, was wearing away her years in mourning by reason of the deaths of her sons, and was alway bewailing her unhappy fate. For all those sons that she had borne in suffering, she had with yet bitterer suffering consigned unto the tomb but a short space thereafter. Accordingly, when she had been four months pregnant, and, by reason of her past experience, was more concerned for the death, than for the birth, of the child she had conceived, she prayed the Blessed Father Francis in faith for the life of her unborn babe. And lo! as she was sleeping one night, a woman appeared unto her in a dream, carrying a lovely little boy in her arms, whom with joyous mien she held out unto her. But when she refused to take him, fearing at once to lose him, that woman added: "Thou mayst safely take him, for him whom the holy Francis shall send thee, pitying thy sorrow, shall be lusty with life and shall rejoice in health." Forthwith the woman awoke, and understood by the vision shewn her from heaven that the Blessed Francis was ready to succour her, and from that hour she redoubled her prayers and made many vows, if so be that she might bear a child such as had been promised. At length her full time came that she should be delivered, and she brought forth a male child, who bloomed with all childish vigour, as if he had received his life's nourishment through the merits of the Blessed Francis, and thus served as an incitement unto his parents for devouter love for Christ and His Saint.

A like miracle the Blessed Father wrought in the town of Tivoli. There was there a woman who had borne several daughters, and was wearying with yearning for a man child, and sighed forth prayers and vows unto Saint

Francis. Then, by his merits, that woman conceived, and it was granted her to bear twin sons, albeit she had but prayed for one.

4. At Viterbo, a woman that was nigh her delivery was deemed nigher death, being wrung by internal pangs, and enduring extremest agony from the throes that be the lot of womankind. When her bodily strength was failing thereunder, and all the skill of leechcraft had been found wanting, the woman called upon the name of the Blessed Francis, and was at once delivered, bringing her travail unto an happy end. Howbeit, having attained her desire, she was forgetful of the favour that had been shewn her, and failed to shew due deference to the Saint, for on his birthday she put forth her hand unto household tasks. And behold on a sudden her right arm, that had been stretched forth to work, remained stiff, and dried up. When she strove to draw it back unto her side with the other, that too by a like punishment withered. Then the woman, seized by a divine fear, renewed her vows, and, by the merits of the pitiful and humble Saint, unto whose service she again vowed herself, was suffered to regain the use of her limbs, that she had lost through her ingratitude, and dishonouring of him.

5. A certain woman, in the countryside round Arezzo, having endured the pangs of childbirth throughout seven days, had already turned black, and was despaired of by all; she made a vow unto the Blessed Francis, and, dying, began to invoke his aid. Even as she uttered the vow, she instantly fell on sleep, and saw in a dream the Blessed Francis speaking gently unto her, and asking whether she knew him by sight, and whether she could recite that antiphon of the glorious Virgin: the “Hail, Queen of mercy,” unto the honour of that same Virgin? And when she made answer that she knew both, “Begin,” saith the Saint, “ the sacred antiphon, and before that thou hast ended it, thou shalt be delivered in safety.” At these words, the woman awaked, and, trembling, began to say the “Hail, Queen of mercy.” And even as she invoked those pitiful eyes, and made mention of the fruit of that virgin womb, she was instantly freed from all distress, and gave birth unto a lovely babe, rendering thanks unto the Queen of mercy who, through the merits of the Blessed Francis, had deigned to shew pity unto her.

VII

OF THE BLIND THAT RECEIVED SIGHT

1. In the Convent of the Brothers Minor at Naples, there abode a Brother named Robert, that Brother had been blind for many years, and some superfluous flesh had grown over his eyes, hindering the movement and use of his eyelids. As very many foreign Brethren were gathered together in that Convent, on their way unto divers parts of the world, the Blessed Father Francis, in their presence, cured on this wise the Brother aforesaid, a mirror of holy obedience,—that by the newness of the miracle he might encourage them to go forward. One night, the aforesaid Brother Robert was lying sick unto death, and even now the commendatory prayer for his soul had been uttered, when lo! the Blessed Father stood by him, together with three Brethren that had been perfect in all saintliness,—to wit, Saint Antony, Brother Augustine, and Brother James of Assisi; for these, even as they had perfectly followed him in life, were now in like manner his zealous companions after death. Saint Francis, taking a knife, cut away that superfluous flesh, and restored his sight as it had formerly been, and brought him back from the jaws of death, and said unto him: “Son Robert, the favour that I have shewn thee is a token unto the Brethren that go unto far distant nations, that I shall go before them, and guide their steps. Let them go (saith he) rejoicing, and let them fulfil the obedience that is laid upon them with eager zest.”

2. At Thebes, in Romania, a blind woman had kept the Vigil of Saint Francis by fasting on bread and water alone, and on the morning of the Feast was brought by her husband unto the church of the Brothers Minor. And, during the celebration of Mass, at the elevation of the Body of Christ, she opened her eyes, saw It clearly, and did most devoutly adore It. Yea, she

cried aloud in her adoration, saying: “Thanks be unto God and His Saint, I see the Body of Christ!” Whereupon, all that were there present turned round as she uttered her triumphant cries. When the sacred rites were ended, the woman returned unto her home, glad in spirit, and having the sight of her eyes. And she exulted, not alone for that she had regained her bodily sight, but also for that the first thing her eyes had looked upon,—through the merits of the Blessed Francis, aided by the power of her faith,—had been that wondrous Sacrament, that is the true and living light of souls.

3. In the town of Pofi, in Campania, a boy aged fourteen had been visited by a sudden affliction, and had utterly lost the sight of his left eye. The sharpness of the agony forced the eye out of its place so that, the nerves being relaxed, it hung down by a finger’s length unto his jaws, and was almost withered up. When there was no remedy left but to cut it off, and his cure was utterly despaired of by those that were tending him, his father turned to invoke the aid of the Blessed Francis with his whole heart. Nor did that unwearied succourer of the unhappy fail to answer the prayers of his suppliant. For the withered eye was by his wondrous might restored unto its own place, and unto its former power, and was enlightened by the beams of longed-for light.

4. In the same province, at Castro, a very heavy beam fell from a height, and struck the head of a certain priest with great force, blinding his left eye. He, cast unto the ground, began with a loud voice to cry pitifully on Saint Francis, saying: “Aid me, most holy Father, that I may be able to go unto thy Feast, as I have promised thy Brethren.” For it was the Vigil of the Saint. At once he arose, most wondrously saved, and brake forth into cries of praise and gladness, and brought amazement and rejoicing on all that stood round, and had been sympathising with his misfortune. He proceeded unto the Feast, telling all men how he had proven the Saint’s mercy and power in his own person.

5. A certain man of Monte Gargano, while he was working in his vineyard, and cutting down a piece of wood with an axe, struck his own eye, and cut it in twain so that the pupil hung down outside. Being in such desperate straits, he gave up hope of being succoured by any mortal skill, and vowed to fast before the Feast of Saint Francis, if he would aid him. At once the

Saint of God restored the eye unto its own place, and joined together again the parts that had been thus cleft, and endowed it with its former sight, so that no traces of the injury remained.

6. The son of a certain nobleman, blind from his birth, received his longed-for sight through the merits of Saint Francis, and, gaining a name from this incident, was called Illuminato. Afterward, when he was of the age to do so, he entered the Order of the Blessed Francis, not forgetful of the benefit that he had received, and made such progress in the light of grace and goodness as that he was seen to be a son of the true light. At length, by the all-powerful merits of the blessed Father, he consummated his holy beginning by a yet holier ending.

7. At Zancati, a town near Anagni, there was a soldier, named Gerard, who had entirely lost his eyesight. Now it befell that two Brothers Minor, coming from foreign parts, turned aside unto his house to be entertained there. Being received with devotion by the whole household, by reason of their veneration for Saint Francis, and treated with the utmost kindness, they gave thanks unto God and their host, and proceeded unto a place of the Brethren that was hard by. And on a night the Blessed Francis appeared in a dream unto one of those Brethren, saying: "Rise, hasten with thy companion unto the house of our host, who hath received Christ and me in receiving you. For I am fain to recompense him for his kindly ministries. He became blind as a punishment for his sins, which he neglected to wipe out by confession and penitence." The Father vanished, and that Brother speedily arose, that, together with his companion, he might hasten to fulfil his behest; they came unto the house of their host, and related unto him in order all things that the one of them had seen. The man was no little astonished, and confirmed all their words as true; he was moved unto tears, and made free confession. At length, having vowed to do penance, and his inner man being thus renewed, he forthwith recovered his bodily sight. The report of this miracle spread on all sides, and stirred up many, not alone to venerate the Saint, but also to make humble confession of their sins and to practise the virtue of hospitality.

VIII

OF THEM THAT WERE DELIVERED FROM DIVERS DISEASES

1. At Citta della Pieve there was a beggar-lad deaf and dumb from birth, whose tongue was so short and small as that it seemed to have been cut quite off, as many who examined it at divers times thought. A man named Mark took him to lodge with him, for the love of God, and the lad, recognising him as a benefactor, became eager to abide with him. One evening, when this man was supping with his wife,—the boy being in their presence,—he said unto his wife: “I should deem it the greatest of all miracles if the Blessed Francis were to restore hearing and speech unto this lad.” And he added: “I vow unto God that if Saint Francis will deign to effect this, for love of him I will support this lad so long as he liveth.” O sure miracle! At once, his tongue grew, and he spake, saying: “Glory be unto God, and unto Saint Francis, who hath given me speech and hearing.”

2. Brother James of Iseo, while yet a child in his father’s house, sustained a right grievous bodily injury. Howbeit, inspired of the Holy Spirit, spite of his youth and infirmity, he entered the Order of Saint Francis out of devotion, disclosing unto none the infirmity wherefrom he suffered. Now it came to pass, that when the body of the Blessed Francis was translated unto the place where the precious treasure of his sacred bones now lieth hidden, the said Brother was present at that joyful translation, that he might show due honour unto the most holy body of his Father, now in glory. And, drawing nigh the tomb, wherein the sacred bones had been placed, in the devotion of his spirit he embraced the holy sepulchre, and forthwith in wondrous wise his injury was repaired, and he felt himself healed, and laid

aside the girdle he had worn, and from that hour was free from all the pain he had suffered in the past. There were delivered from a like infirmity Brother Bartolo of Gubbio, Brother Angelo of Todi, Nicolas, a priest of Sticano, John of Fora, a certain citizen of Pisa, and another of Cisterna, Peter of Sicily, and a man from the town of Spello, hard by Assisi, and very many others; all of whose marvellous cures were wrought through the mercy of God, and the merits of the Blessed Francis.

3. In the Maremma there was a woman who for the space of five years had suffered from the loss of her wits, and had also lost her sight and hearing; she would tear her garments with her teeth, she had no fear of fire or water, and, to crown all, endured frightful suffering from the falling sickness. Now, on a certain night,—the divine mercy being minded to succour her,—she was enlightened from heaven by the beams of a healing radiance, and beheld the Blessed Francis seated upon a lofty throne. Falling before him, she implored in suppliant wise to be made whole. As he did not as yet grant her prayer, the woman vowed and promised that, so long as she had aught to give, she would never refuse alms unto them that asked for the love of God and of the Saint. Then the Saint remembered that he had of old made a like pact with the Lord, and, making the sign of the Cross over her, he restored her unto perfect health.

It is known from truthful narrations that Francis, the Saint of God, hath in his mercy set free from a like affliction a certain maiden at Norcia, and the son of a certain nobleman, and divers others.

4. Peter of Foligno had on a time set forth to visit the shrine of the Blessed Michael, but, as he was making the pilgrimage with but little reverence, he was assailed by demons while tasting the water of a certain fountain. For three years thenceforward he was possessed, and his body rent in pieces, he uttered most vile words, and was ghastly to look upon; howbeit, he had at times intervals of sanity, and in one of them he humbly besought the aid of the Blessed Francis,—that he had heard to be effectual in putting to flight the powers of the air,—and went unto the tomb of the holy Father. So soon as he touched it with his hand, he was miraculously delivered from the demons that were so cruelly rending him.

In like manner, the mercy of Francis succoured a certain woman at Narni that was possessed of a devil, and many other folk, the extremities of whose torments, and the manner of whose cures, it would take long to relate one by one.

5. A man named Buono, a citizen of Fano, who was a paralytic and leper, was carried by his parents unto the church of the Blessed Francis, and was made perfectly whole from both diseases.

Moreover, yet another youth, named Alto, of San Severino, who was leprous all over, having first made a vow, was brought unto the tomb of the Saint, and by his merits was cleansed from the leprosy. The Saint had an especial efficacy in curing this malady, because in his love of humility and charity, he had ever humbly set himself to do the lepers service.

6. A woman of noble birth, named Rogata, in the diocese of Sora, had been for the space of twenty-three years tormented by an issue of blood, and had moreover suffered very many things from many physicians, and right often that woman seemed like to die from her exceeding weakness; yet if ever the issue was checked, her whole body became swollen. Hearing a boy singing in the Roman speech of the miracles that God had wrought through the Blessed Francis, she was moved by exceeding grief, and brake forth into tears, and began thus, with enkindled faith, to say within her heart: “O blessed Father Francis, thou who shinest in the light of such miracles, if thou wilt deign to release me from this infirmity, great glory will be thine, for that hitherto thou has wrought no miracle to compare thereunto.” Why should I say more? Even as she spake, she felt that she was delivered, by the merits of the Blessed Francis. Her son moreover, whose name was Mario, and who had a crippled arm, was healed by Saint Francis, unto whom he had made a vow. The blessed standard-bearer of Christ also made whole a woman in Sicily that for seven years had been tormented by an issue of blood.

7. In the city of Rome, there was a woman named Prassede, renowned for her piety. At a tender age, she had secluded herself, for love of her heavenly Bridegroom, in a narrow cell, and had now abode there for nigh forty years; she gained from the Blessed Francis an especial favour. For on a day, when

for some useful purpose she had climbed on the balcony of her cell, imagining that she felt herself pushed, she fell, breaking her leg and ankle, and dislocating her shoulder. Then there appeared unto her our most merciful Father, dazzling white in his glorious apparel, and began to address her with gentle words: “Rise,” saith he, “blessed daughter, rise, be not afeared.” And, taking her by the hand, he lifted her up, and vanished. Then she turned hither and thither throughout her cell, deeming she had seen a vision; until, at her cries, a light was brought, and she, feeling herself entirely healed by the servant of God, Francis, related in order all things that had befallen her.

IX

OF THEM THAT DID NOT OBSERVE HIS FEAST, AND THAT FAILED IN REVERENCE TOWARD THE SAINT

1. In the province of Poitou, in a town called Simo, there was a priest named Reginald, devoted unto the Blessed Francis, whose Feast he had notified unto his parishioners as one that should be observed with all solemnity. Nevertheless, one of his flock that knew not the might of the Saint, lightly esteemed the behest of his priest. He went forth into the country to cut wood, and when he had made himself ready for work, heard a voice speaking unto him thrice on this wise: “It is a Feast, it is not lawful to work.” Howbeit his slavish foolhardiness was not to be bridled by the bidding of the priest nor by the utterance of a voice from heaven, wherefore the divine might forthwith added, for the glory of the Saint, a miracle and a chastisement. For at once,—even as he was holding the forked log in one hand, and lifted the other, holding the iron axe, to cut it,—the divine might caused either hand to cleave unto that it held, so that he could not avail to loosen the fingers at all, and set either free. Stricken thereby with exceeding amazement, and knowing not what to do, he hastened unto the church, while many ran together from all sides to see this portent. There, pierced to the heart, he humbly vowed himself, before the altar, unto the Blessed Francis, at the exhortation of one of the priests that were present,—for many priests had been called together, and had come to keep the Feast. Three vows he made, even as he had thrice heard that voice; to wit, that he would observe his Feast; that, on his Feast, he would come unto that church wherein he then was; and that he would go in person unto the tomb of the

Saint. Marvellous indeed to relate, as he uttered the first vow, one of his fingers was set free, as he uttered the second, another, at the third vow, a third finger could be unclasped, and thereafter the whole hand, and the other hand to follow, while all the folk, that had now gathered in great numbers, were most devoutly beseeching the mercy of the Saint. Thus the man regained the free use of his hands as afore, and of his own accord laid down his implements, while all praised God, and the marvellous power of the Saint, who had shewn such miraculous power to smite and to heal. And the implements hang unto this day before the altar raised in honour of the Blessed Francis on the spot, in memory of the event. Many other miracles were wrought there and in the neighbourhood, and proved both that the Saint is exalted in heaven, and that his Feast should be observed on earth with all honour.

2. In the city of Mans, moreover, when on the Feast of Saint Francis a certain woman put forth her hand unto her distaff and laid hold on the spindle with her fingers,—her hands stiffened, and her fingers began to be tormented with burning heat. Then, learning by suffering, and recognising the power of the Saint, she was pricked to the heart and ran unto the Brethren. While his devout sons were imploring the mercy of the holy Father on her behalf, she was without delay made whole, nor were her hands in any way hurt, save that there remained only a scar as of a burn, in memory of the event.

In like manner, a woman in greater Campania, and another woman in the town of Oletto, and a third at Piglio, who had thought scorn of observing the Feast of the blessed Father, at the first, when they walked not uprightly, were miraculously punished, but afterward, when they repented, were yet more miraculously released, through the merits of Saint Francis.

3. A certain soldier of Borgo, in the province of Massa, did most irreverently belittle the works of the Blessed Francis, and the signs of his miracles. He heaped insults on the pilgrims that came to honour his memory, and indulged in foolish chatter against the Brethren in public. Once while he was assailing the fame of the Saint of God, he added, over and above his sins, this hateful blasphemy: “If it be true, (saith he), that this Francis is a Saint, let my body fall by the sword this very day; but if he be

not a Saint, let me escape unhurt.” The wrath of God tarried not in inflicting a meet punishment upon him, since already his prayer had become sin. For but a short space thereafter, as this blasphemer was insulting his nephew, the youth took a sword, and dyed it in his uncle’s heart’s-blood. Thus on that same day this guilty wretch did die,—a slave of hell and son of darkness,—that all others might learn that the wondrous works of Francis are not to be belittled by blaspheming words, but honoured by devout praises.

4. A certain judge, named Alexander, who by his venomous tongue had withdrawn all those that he could from their devotion unto the Blessed Francis, was by the sentence of God deprived of the use of his tongue, and remained dumb throughout six years. He, being punished by the same member wherewithal he had sinned, was recalled unto deep penitence, and grieved that he had railed against the miracles of the Saint. Accordingly, the anger of the merciful Saint did not endure, but he received him, repentant and humbly invoking his name, into his favour, and restored his speech. Thenceforward he devoted his once blaspheming tongue unto the praises of the Saint, receiving through his chastisement alike a devout spirit and a discipline.

X

OF CERTAIN OTHER MIRACLES OF DIVERS KINDS

1. In the town of Gagliano, in the diocese of Sulmona, there was a certain woman named Mary, who had yielded herself in devout service unto Christ Jesus and unto the Blessed Francis. One day in Summer time she went forth to seek with her own hands her needful food. As the heat waxed exceeding fierce, she began to faint for burning thirst, and, having no draught wherewith to relieve her, forasmuch as she was alone on a bare mountainside, she threw herself on the ground like one dead, and invoked her patron Saint Francis with devout emotion. And while the woman was persisting in her moving and humble prayer, utterly worn out with toil, thirst, and heat, she fell into a brief slumber. And lo! Saint Francis approached, and calling her by name said: "Rise, and drink the water that is proffered as a gift from heaven unto thee and unto many." At the sound of these words the woman rose from sleep, no little strengthened, and taking a fern that was near her, she tore it up from the ground by the roots and, scratching the soil round about with a little twig, she came on a spring of water, which, as she first beheld it, was but a little trickle, but waxed at once by the divine power into a fountain. Then the woman drank, and, having sated her thirst, bathed her eyes, which for a long time past had been dim through an infirmity, but from that moment she felt them steeped in new sight. The woman hastened unto her home, announcing unto all this astounding miracle wrought unto the honour of Saint Francis. Many folk ran together from all sides at the report of the miracle, and, taught by experience, proved the miraculous efficacy of that water, for many who touched it, having previously made confession, were released from divers

troubling diseases. That spring has endured there until this day, and is clearly to be seen, and an oratory hath been built on the spot in honour of the Blessed Francis.

2. In Spain, at San Facondo, a man had a cherry-tree that had withered, and, beyond all hope, the Saint miraculously restored it unto flourishing life of leaf, blossom, and fruit.

Moreover, the tillers of the land round Vilese were freed, by his miraculous aid, from a plague of worms that were devouring their vineyards on every hand.

A certain priest at Paleuria had a granary that swarmed every year with grain-devouring vermin, until, having committed it in faith unto Saint Francis, it was thoroughly purged.

And the lord of Pietramala in Apulia committed his land unto him as a suppliant, and it was preserved absolutely free from an hateful plague of locusts, albeit all the lands that bordered it were consumed by the pest aforesaid.

3. A certain man, named Martin, had led his cattle to pasture far from the town where he dwelt, when one of the oxen had its leg so badly broken by a fall as that there seemed no use in thinking of any remedy for it. Being anxious to strip off the hide, and having no implement wherewith he might do so, he returned home, entrusting the care of his ox unto the Blessed Francis, and committing it confidently unto the sure protection of the Saint, that it might not be eaten of wolves before his return. Returning when it was fully day unto the ox that he had left in the woods, and bringing the butcher with him, he found it feeding, and so perfectly sound that he tried in vain to distinguish the broken leg from the other. He gave thanks unto the good shepherd, that had had such watchful care for his beast, and had granted it healing. The humble Saint knew how to succour all them that called upon him, nor disdained any mortal needs, howsoever trifling. For when a man of Amiterno had a beast of burden stolen from him, he restored it. And when a woman of Interdoco brake, by letting it fall, a new dish into many pieces, he made it whole again. And for a man at Montolmo, in the Marches, he repaired a ploughshare that had been broken in pieces.

4. In the diocese of Sabina, there was an aged woman, eighty years old, whose daughter died, leaving a babe at the breast. This poor old woman was full of need, but empty of milk, and knew no woman who could give the starving little one milk to drink, drop by drop, as its need demanded; wherefore the aged mother knew not at all where to turn. As the babe waxed weaker, and she found herself at a loss for any human help, one night she turned with her whole heart to implore the aid of the Blessed Father Francis, shedding a flood of tears. At once that lover of the age of innocence stood by her, saying: "I am Francis, O woman, whom thou hast invoked with so many tears. Place (saith he) the babe's mouth at thy breasts, for the Lord will give thee milk in abundance." The aged woman obeyed the behest of the Saint, and at once the breasts of her that was eighty years of age poured forth an abundance of milk. The miraculous gift of the Saint was seen of all, many, both men and women, hastening to behold it. And since they could not impeach with their tongue that which their eyes had witnessed, they were all stirred up to praise God in the marvellous might and lovable goodness of His Saint.

5. At Spoleto, a man and his wife had one only son, whom they bewailed each day as a reproach unto their race. For his arms were fastened unto his neck, and his knees attached unto his breast, and his feet joined unto his back parts, so that he seemed more like a monster than like an human offspring. His mother, stricken with very passionate sorrow by reason of this, with frequent groanings cried on Christ, invoking the aid of Saint Francis, that he would deign to help her in her misery, and exposed as she was unto such reproach. Accordingly, on a night when by reason of this sadness a sad slumber had overtaken her, there appeared unto her Saint Francis, soothing her with gentle speech, and withal bidding her carry the child unto a place hard by that was dedicated unto himself; there water should be poured on him from the well of that place, in the name of the Lord, and he should be made perfectly sound. But she neglected to obey the behest of the Saint, wherefore he repeated the same a second time. Yea, appearing a third time, he led the woman and her child unto the gate of the said place, himself going before and guiding them. Now certain noble dames were arriving at the said place, by reason of devotion, and when the woman had heedfully told them of her vision, they joined her in presenting

the child unto the Brethren, and, drawing water from the well, the most nobly born of them all bathed the child with her own hands. Forthwith the boy was seen to be sound and whole, with all his limbs set in their right places, and the overwhelming miracle brought amazement on all.

6. In the town of Cori, in the diocese of Ostia, there was a man who had so entirely lost the use of his leg as that he could in no wise walk nor move himself. Being thus set in bitter straits, and despairing of mortal aid, he began one night,—as if he saw the Blessed Francis present in bodily form,—to take up the tale of his complaints on this wise: “Succour me, Saint Francis, remembering how I have served thee, and the devotion I have paid thee! For I have carried thee upon mine ass, I have kissed thy holy feet and thy holy hands. I have ever been devoted unto thee, ever wished thee well, and lo, I am dying by the extreme agony of this suffering.” Stirred by these complaints, forthwith the Saint, mindful of his benefactors, and well-pleased by devotion, appeared, together with one Brother, unto the man as he lay wakeful. He said that he had come at his call, and had brought the means of healing. He touched the painful spot with a little staff, made in the shape of a T, and at once the ulcer broke, and he rendered the man his perfect health. And,—what is still more marvellous,—he left the sacred sign T printed on the spot where the healed ulcer had been, as a reminder of the miracle.

7. With this sign, Saint Francis used to sign his letters, whensoever by reason of his affection he dictated any writing. And lo! as the mind travelleth over the divers miracles of the glorious Father Francis, and is bewildered by their varied story, it is not without the divine leading that it hath arrived at that sign of our salvation, Tau, wherein that glorious standard-bearer of the Cross waxed so mighty; thus we may learn therefrom that, even as the Cross was that which exalted his merits and won him salvation, whileas he was fighting in Christ’s train, so too it is become that which confirmeth the witness unto his glory, now that he is triumphing with Christ.

8. This great and marvellous mystery of the Cross,—in whose depths the gifts of graces, the merits of virtues, and the treasures of wisdom and learning lie so profoundly veiled that they be hidden from the wise and prudent of the world,—was so fully revealed unto this babe in Christ as that

all his life was naught but a following the footsteps of the Cross, he savoured no sweetness save that of the Cross, he preached naught save the glory of the Cross. For verily at the outset of his conversion he could say with the Apostle; “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Nor less truly, as he made progress in his conversion, might he have added: “As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy.” Yea, and most truly, in the ending thereof, he could have concluded: “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” And this too we are fain to hear from him day by day: “Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”

9. Thou mayest, therefore, in full assurance glory in the glory of the Cross, O glorious standard-bearer of Christ, forasmuch as, beginning from the Cross, thou madest progress according unto the rule of the Cross, and at length art consummated in the Cross, while that, by the witness of the Cross, it is known unto all the faithful how great is thy glory in heaven. And in full assurance let those now follow thee who have come forth out of Egypt, who,—the sea being divided by the staff of Christ’s Cross,—shall pass through the desert into the Promised Land, the land of the living; who, crossing the Jordan of our mortality, shall enter therein by the marvellous power of that same Cross. Thither may that true Leader and Saviour of His people, Christ Jesus Crucified, bring us, by the merits of His servant Francis, unto the praise and glory of God One and Three, Who liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.

THE PSALTER OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

SAINT BONAVENTURE

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THE PSALTER OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN MARY

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

“Take hold on her, and she shall exalt thee: thou shalt be glorified by her, when thou shalt embrace her. She shall give to thy head increase of graces, and protect thee with a noble crown.” (Prov. IV, 8-9.)

Glory be to God on high, and thanksgiving, and the voice of praise, who at one time by the mysteries of prophecy, at another by oracles from Heaven, again by the reading of the Gospel, and now by the mouth of preachers, in many ways and by divers channels, most sincerely urges and invites us to honor the Virgin Mary, the Queen of Heaven and of the Angels; that by her holy merits, most worthy of all acceptance, we, being delivered from the depths of hell, may be inscribed by her in the ranks of the angels.

Wherefore, although Solomon spoke the aforesaid words of Wisdom, nevertheless the Holy Spirit, by a mystical application, intends them to be understood of the most excellent Virgin Mary.

By means of these words, dearly beloved, He is drawing you to His love, and by various promises is attracting and softening your hearts, that you may enjoy His divine embraces. His meaning is that you will obtain four wonderful gifts, if this glorious Virgin is joined to you by a spiritual bond, and is embraced by you in the arms of fervent desire, with great reverence and devotion. First, she will bring you exaltation; and she shall exalt thee; secondly, glorification; and thou shalt be glorified by her; thirdly, the abundance of graces; she shall give to thy head increase of graces; fourthly, the unfading crown of perpetual glory, and protect thee with a noble crown. Therefore I beseech thee, dearly beloved and most desired, do not repel so noble and so beautiful a virgin; do not make little of so admirable and revered a queen as the Virgin Mary: lest, if she should see herself despised by you, you will be, I will not say, deprived of such great favors, but, which God forbid, you will incur perpetual evils. Expand the bosom of your mind

to serve her, prepare your heart to praise and glorify her, loose your tongue, and with swift service hasten to please her. For there is no doubt that from her nearness to you, you will become more devout, from contact with her you will grow more pure, from her embrace you will abound more in grace and be more resplendent in purity.

That I may give you an occasion of obtaining such great gifts, I send you the Psalter of this most Holy Virgin, put together and composed indeed by my feeble intelligence, but with her grace and help; by means of it you will praise with divers hymns, now her virginity and chastity, now her fecundity and sanctity, now her clemency and bounty. You will be able to salute her as full of all grace, or as filled with all knowledge, or as illumined by all understanding and wisdom. There you will bless the Fruit of her glorious womb, the members of His holy body, and the prerogatives of

His soul, bestowing all sanctity. There you will invoke the aid of all the choirs of angels to praise her, and of all the multitudes of holy men, the isles of the nations, the heavens, the beauty of all luminaries and of the whole world. There you will beseech her to destroy the power of your spiritual enemies, to obtain for you pardon of all your sins, that she may render the great Judge propitious to you, that she may illumine your deathbed by her gracious presence, and obtain for you joy without end.

Therefore, O dearly beloved souls, graciously receive this little gift which I offer you, and strive to draw fruit therefrom; by means of it frequently praise the Mother of God; and thus perchance she will turn to you her gracious countenance, receiving you to her love, refreshing your soul in the present, and placing upon your head a crown of precious stones in the world to come.

THE PSALTER OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

PSALM 1

Blessed is the man, O Virgin Mary, who loves thy name; thy grace will comfort his soul.

He will be refreshed as by fountains of water; thou wilt produce in him the fruit of justice.

Blessed art thou among women; by the faith of thy holy heart.

By the beauty of thy body thou surpassest all women; by the excellence of thy sanctity thou surpassest all angels and archangels

Thy mercy and thy grace are preached everywhere; God has blessed the works of thy hands.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 2

Why have our enemies raged and our adversaries devised vain things?

May thy right hand protect us, O Mother of God: as a line of battle terrible in aspect, confounding and destroying them.

Come ye to her, all who labor and are in trouble: and she will give refreshment to your souls.

Draw nigh to her in your temptations: and the serenity of her countenance will bring you peace and confidence.

Bless her with your whole heart: for the earth is full of her mercy.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 3

O Lady, why are they multiplied who afflict me? By thy might thou shalt follow them and scatter them.

Loose the bands of our impiety: take away the burden of our sins. Have mercy on me, O Lady, and heal my sickness: take away the grief and anguish of my heart.

Deliver me not into the hands of my enemies: and in the day of my death strengthen thou my soul.

Lead me into the harbor of salvation: and give up for me my spirit to my Maker and Creator.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 4

When I called upon thee, thou didst hear me, O Lady: and from thy throne on high thou hast deigned to be mindful of me.

From the roaring of the wild beasts prepared to devour me: and from the hands of them that sought me, thy grace will deliver me.

For thy mercy is kind and thy heart loving: towards all who invoke thy holy name.

Blessed art thou, O Lady, forever: and thy majesty for evermore.

Glorify her, all ye nations in your strength: and all ye peoples of the earth, extol her magnificence.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 5

Incline thine ear, O Lady, to hear my prayers: and turn not away from me the beauty of thy face.

Turn our mourning into rejoicing: and our tribulation into joy. May our enemies fall down at our feet: by thy power may their heads be crushed.

Let every tongue praise thee: and let all flesh bless thy holy name.

For thy spirit is sweet above honey: and thy inheritance above the honey and the honeycomb.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 6

Lady, let me not be corrected in the wrath of God: nor be judged by Him in His anger.

For the honor of thy name, O Lady: may the Fruit of thy glorious womb be propitious to us.

From the gate of hell and from the depths of the abyss: by thy holy prayers deliver us.

May the eternal gates be opened unto us: that we may declare forever thy wondrous works.

For it is not the dead, nor those in hell, who will praise thee, O Lady: but those who by thy grace will obtain eternal life.

Glory be to the Father etc.

PSALM 7

O my Lady, in thee have I hoped: from my enemies deliver me.

Shut thou the mouth of the lion and his teeth: restrain the lips of those that persecute me.

For thy name's sake delay not to accomplish thy mercy in us.

May the brightness of thy countenance shine upon us: that the Most High may keep remembrance of us.

If the enemy should persecute my soul, O Lady, may I be strengthened by thy help: lest his sword should strike me.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 8

O Lady, Our Lord has become our brother and our Savior.

Like the flame in the burning bush, and the dew in the fleece: the Word of God descends into thee forever.

The Holy Spirit hath made thee fruitful: the power of the Most High hath overshadowed thee.

Blessed be thy most pure conception: blessed be thy virginal bringing forth.

Blessed be the purity of thy body: blessed be the sweetness of the mercy of thy heart.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 9

I will praise thee, O Lady, with my whole heart: and I will declare among the nations thy praise and glory.

For to thee is due glory, and thanksgiving, and the voice of praise.

May sinners find grace with God by thee, the finder of grace and salvation.

May the humble penitents hope for pardon: heal thou the bruises of their hearts.

In the beauty of peace and wealth rest: thou shalt feed us after the toil of our pilgrimage.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 10

I trust in our Lady; because of the sweetness of the mercy of her name.

Her eyes look upon the poor: and her hands are stretched out to the orphan and the widow.

Seek after her from your youth: she will glorify you before the face of the peoples.

Her mercy will deliver us from the multitude of our sins: and will bestow on us fruitfulness of merits.

Stretch out to us thy arm, O glorious Virgin: and do not turn away from us thy glorious face.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 11

Save me, O Mother of fair love: fount of clemency and sweetness of piety.

Thou alone makest the circuit of the earth: that thou mayst help those that call upon thee.

Beautiful are thy ways: and thy paths are peaceful.

In thee shine forth the beauty of chastity, the light of justice, and the splendor of truth.

Thou art clothed with the sunrays as with a vesture: resplendent with a shining twelve-starred crown.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 12

How long, O Lady, wilt thou forget me and not deliver me in the day of tribulation ?

How long will my enemy be exalted above me? By the might of thy strength do thou crush him.

Open the eyes of thy mercy: lest our enemy prevail against us.

We magnify thee, the finder of grace, by whom the ages of the world are restored.

Thou art exalted above the choirs of angels: pray for us before the throne of God.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 13

Our foolish enemy hath said in his heart: I will follow after and take him, and my hand shall slay him.

Arise, O Lady, and prevent him, and supplant him: destroy all his machinations.

Thy beauty astonishes the sun and the moon; the angelic powers serve and obey thee.

By thy gentle touch the sick are healed: by thy rose-sweet fragrance the dead revive.

Virgin Mother of God, He whom the whole world cannot contain was enclosed within thee, being made Man.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 14

O Lady, who shall dwell in the tabernacle of God ? or who shall rest with the leaders of the people?

The poor in spirit, and the pure of heart, the meek, the peaceful, and the mourners.

Be mindful, O Lady, that thou speak for us good things: and that thou mayest turn away the indignation of thy Son from us.

O sinners, let us embrace the footprints of Mary, and cast ourselves at her blessed feet.

Let us hold her fast, nor let her go: until we deserve to be blessed by her.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 15

Preserve me, O Lady, for I have hoped in thee: do thou bestow on me the dew of thy grace.

Thy virginal womb has begotten the Son of the Most High.

Blessed be thy breasts, by which thou hast nourished the Savior with deific milk.

Let us give praise to the glorious Virgin: whosoever ye be that have found grace and mercy through her.

Give glory to her name: and praise forever her conception and her birth.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 16

Hear, O Lady, my justice and my love: remove from me my tribulations.

I will give praise to thee in the voice of rejoicing: when thou shalt magnify thy mercy in me.

Imitate her, ye holy virgins of God: as Agnes, Barbara, Dorothy, and Catherine have done.

Give honor to her by the voice of your lips: thus have Agatha, Lucy,

Margaret, and Cecilia received her grace.

She will give you as your Spouse the Son of the Father: and a crown incomparably radiant with the lilies of Paradise.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 17

I will love thee, O Lady of heaven and earth: and I will call upon thy name in the nations.

Give praise to her, ye who are troubled in heart: and she will strengthen you against your enemies.

Give to us, O Lady, the grace of thy breasts: from the dropping milk of thy sweetness refresh the inmost souls of thy children.

Honor her, O all ye religious: for she is your helper and your special advocate.

Be thou our refreshment, glorious Mother of Christ: for thou art the admirable foundation of the religious life.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 18

The heavens declare thy glory: and the fragrance of thine unguents is spread abroad among the nations.

Sigh ye unto her, ye lost sinners: and she will lead you to the harbor of pardon.

In hymns and canticles knock at her heart: and she will rain down upon you the grace of her sweetness.

Glorify her, ye just, before the throne of God: for by the fruit of her womb you have worked justice.

Praise ye her, ye heaven of heavens: and the whole earth will glorify her name.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 19

Thou shalt hear us, O Lady, in the day of tribulation: and by our prayers turn to us thy merciful countenance.

Cast us not off in the time of our death: but help the soul, when it shall have left the body.

Send an angel to meet it: by whom it may be defended from the enemy.

Show unto it the most serene Judge of ages: who for thy grace will bestow pardon.

Let it feel thy refreshment in its torments: and grant to it a place among the elect of God.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 20

O Lady, in thy strength our heart shall rejoice: and in the sweetness of thy name our soul shall be consoled.

From thy throne send us wisdom: by which we shall be sweetly enlightened in all truth.

Give us grace to abstain from carnal desires: that the light of thy grace may arise in our hearts.

How sweet are thy words, O Lady, to them that love thee: how sweet is the shower of thy graces.

I will sing unto thy glory and honor: and in thy name I will glory forever.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 21

O God, my God: let Him look at thy merits in me, ever Virgin Mary.

O my Lady, I have cried to thee by day and by night: and thou hast done mercy with thy servant.

Because I have hoped in thy mercy: thou hast taken away from me everlasting reproach.

Mine enemies have mocked me on every side: but thou under the shadow of thy hand hast bestowed good refreshment on me.

Let all the families of the peoples adore thee: and let all the orders of the angels glorify thee.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 22

The Lord rules me, O Virgin Mother of God: because thou hast turned on me thy gracious countenance.

Blessed are thy most resplendent eyes: which thou deignest to turn on sinners.

Blessed is the light and the splendor of thy countenance: blessed is the grace of thy face.

Blessed be the mercy of thy hands: blessed be the stream of thy virginal milk.

Let the prophets and apostles of God bless thee: let martyrs, confessors, and virgins sing praise to thee.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 23

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof: but thou, O most holy Mother, reignest with Him forever.

Thou art clothed with glory and beauty: every precious stone is thy covering and thy clothing.

The brightness of the sun is upon thy head: the beauty of the moon is beneath thy feet.

Shining orbs adorn thy throne: the morning stars glorify thee forever.

Be mindful of us, O Lady, in thy good pleasure: and make us worthy to glorify thy name.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 24

To thee, O Lady, have I lifted up my soul: in the judgment of God, by the help of thy prayers, I shall not be ashamed.

Let not my adversaries make game of me: for those who trust in thee are strengthened.

Let not the snares of death prevail against me: and the camps of the malignant not hinder my steps.

Crush their violence in thy might: and with mildness meet my soul.

Be my guide unto my fatherland: and deign to join me to thy angelic hosts.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 25

Judge me, O Lady, for I have departed from my innocence: but because I have hoped in thee I shall not become weak.

Enkindle my heart with the fire of thy love: and with the girdle of chastity bind my reins.

For thy mercy and thy clemency are before my eyes: and I was delighted in the voice of thy praise.

O Lady, I have loved the beauty of thy face: and I have revered thy sacred majesty.

Praise ye her name, for she is holy: let her wonders be declared forever.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 26

O Lady, may thy light be the splendor of my countenance: and let the serenity of thy grace shine upon my mind.

Raise up my head: and I will sing a psalm to thy name.

Turn not away thy face from me: for from my youth up I have greatly desired thy beauty and thy grace.

I have loved thee and sought after thee, O Queen of Heaven: withdraw not thy mercy and thy grace from thy servant.

I will give praise to thee in the nations: and I will honor the throne of thy glory.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 27

To thee, O Lady, will I cry, and thou shalt hear me: in the voice of thy praise thou wilt make me glad.

Have mercy on me in the day of my trouble: and in the light of thy truth deliver me.

Blessed be thou, O Lady: to the uttermost ends of the earth.

The sanctuary which thy hands have established: is the holy temple of thy body.

Thy conscience is pure and undefiled: a place of propitiation and the holy dwelling of God.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 28

Bring to Our Lady, O ye sons of God: bring to Our Lady praise and reverence.

Give strength to thy saints, O holy Mother: and thy blessing to those who praise and glorify thee.

Hear the groans of those who sigh to thee: and despise not the prayers of those who invoke thy name.

Let thy hand be ready to help me: and thy ear inclined to my prayer.

Let the heavens and the earth bless thee: the sea and the world.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 29

I will exalt thee, O Lady, for thou hast taken me up: thou wilt deliver me from the wicked enemy.

Turn to me and quicken me, from the gates of death lead me back: and from the rivers of tribulation which have surrounded me.

For the sake of thy empire and the magnificence of thy right hand: break and scatter all my enemies.

And I will offer thee a sacrifice of praise: and I will most devoutly exalt thy glory.

Rejoice, ye Heavens, and be glad, O Earth: because Mary will console her servants and will have mercy on her poor.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 30

In thee, O Lady, have I hoped, let me never be confounded: receive me in thy grace.

Thou art my strength and my refuge: my consolation and my protection.

To thee, O Lady, have I cried, when my heart was in anguish: and thou hast heard me from the heights of the eternal hills.

Thou shalt draw me out of the snares which they hid for me: for thou art my helper.

Into thy hands, O Lady, I commend my spirit: my whole life and my last day.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 31

Blessed are they whose hearts love thee, O Virgin Mary: their sins will be mercifully washed away by thee.

Holy, chaste, and flowering are thy breasts: which blossomed into the flower of eternal greenness.

The beauty of thy grace will never see corruption: and the grace of thy countenance will never fade.

Blessed art thou, O sublime Rod of Jesse: for thou hast raised thyself unto Him who sits in the highest.

O Virgin Queen, thou thyself art the way by which salvation from on high hath visited us.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 32

Rejoice, ye just, in the Virgin Mary: and in uprightness of heart praise ye her together.

Draw near unto her with reverence and devotion: and let your heart be delighted in her salutation.

Give unto her the sacrifice of praise: and be ye inebriated from the breasts of her sweetness.

For she sheds upon you the rays of her loving kindness: and she will enlighten you with the splendors of her mercy.

Her fruit is most sweet: it grows ever sweeter in the mouth and the heart of the wise.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 33

I will bless Our Lady at all times: and her praise shall never fail in my mouth.

Magnify her with me: all ye who are nourished with the milk and honey of her refreshment.

In dangers and doubts invoke her: and in necessities you will find sweet help and refreshment.

Take example from her conversation: and be zealous to imitate her charity and humility.

Because thou wast most humble, O Lady: thou hast induced the Uncreated Word to take flesh from thee.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 34

Judge, O Lady, them that harm me: arise against them and avenge my cause.

My soul will rejoice in thee: and I will devoutly exult in thy benefits.

The heavens and the earth are full of thy grace and sweetness: from every side thy kindness surrounds us.

For wherever we may walk: the fruit of thy virginal womb meets us.

Let us run, therefore, dearly beloved, and salute the noble Virgin overflowing with sweetness: that we may rest in the bosom of her sweetness.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 35

The unjust man said that he would sin in secret: by thee let him depart from his impious purpose, O Mother of God.

Incline towards us the countenance of God: impel Him to have mercy.

O Lady, in heaven is thy mercy: and thy grace is spread abroad in the earth.

Power and strength are in thy arm: vigor and fortitude in thy right hand.

Blessed be thy empire over the heavens: blessed be thy magnificence upon the earth

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 36

Be not angry with the wicked, O Lady: sweeten their fury by thy grace.

O ye religious and cloistered souls, hope in her: confide in her, ye priests and seculars.

Take delight in her praises: and she will grant the petitions of your heart.

Better is a little with her grace: than treasures of silver and precious stones.

Glory be to thee forever, O Queen of Heaven: and never forget us at any time.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 37

O Lady, let not the Lord rebuke me in His anger: obtain for us pardon for our sins.

Let all our desire be in thy sight: our hope and our confidence.

My heart is troubled within me: light departs from my interior,

Enlighten with thy brightness my blindness: sweeten with thy sweetness my contrite heart.

Forsake us not, O Lady, Mother of God: let thy grace and thy power be at my right hand.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 38

I said: I will keep my ways, O Lady: when by thee the grace of Christ was given to me.

By thy sweetness my soul was melted: my bowels are inflamed by thy love.

Hear my prayer, O Lady, and my supplication: and let mine enemies pine away.

Have mercy on me from Heaven and from the height of thy throne: and permit me not to be troubled in the valley of misery.

Keep my foot, lest it should be injured: and may thy grace be with my end.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 39

Expecting, I have expected thy grace: and thou hast done with me according to the multitude of the mercies of thy name.

Thou hast heard my prayers: and thou hast led me out of the den of misery, and from the pit of the enemy.

Manifold and wonderful are thy gifts, O Lady: incomparable are the gifts of thy graces.

Let all those exult and rejoice in thee who love thee: let them who have hated thy name, fall into hell.

Blessed be thou forever, O Lady: forever, world without end.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 40

Blessed Mary understandeth concerning the needy and the poor: who remains faithful in her praises.

Lady of the angels, Queen of the world: purify my heart with the fire of love and of thy charity.

Thou art the mother of the illumination of my heart: thou art the nurse who refreshes my mind.

My mouth longs to praise thee: my mind devoutly aspires to venerate thee with ardent affection.

My soul longs to pray to thee: because the whole of my being commends itself to thy guidance and teaching.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 41

As the hart longs for the water-brooks, so doth my soul pine for thy love.

For thou art the mother of my life: and the sublime repairer of my flesh.

For thou art the feeder of the Savior of my soul: the beginning and the end of all my salvation.

Hear me, O Lady, let my stains be cleansed: enlighten me, O Lady, that my darkness may be illuminated.

Let my tepidity be enkindled by thy love: let my torpor be expelled by thy grace.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 42

Judge me, O Lady, and discern my cause from the perverse nation: from the malignant serpent and the pestiferous dragon deliver me.

Let thy holy fecundity scatter him: let thy blessed virginity bruise his head.

Let thy holy prayers strengthen us against him: let thy merits put to nought his strength.

Send the persecutor of my soul into the abyss: let the infernal pit swallow him alive.

But I and my soul will bless thy name in the land of my captivity: and I will glorify thee forever and ever.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 43

O Lady, we have heard with our ears: and our fathers have told it unto us.

For thy merits are ineffable: and thy wonders exceedingly stupendous.

O Lady, innumerable are thy virtues: and inestimable are thy mercies.

Exult, O my soul, and rejoice in her: for many good things are prepared for those who praise her.

Blessed be thou, O Queen of the Heavens and the angels: and let those who praise thy magnificence be blessed by God.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 44

My heart hath uttered a good word, Lady: it is sweetened with honey-flowing dew.

By thy sanctity let my sins be purged: by thy integrity may incorruption be bestowed upon me.

By thy virginity may my soul be loved by Christ: and joined to him by the bond of love.

By thy fecundity I, a captive, am redeemed: by thy virginal bringing forth I am delivered from eternal death.

By thy most worthy Son I, a lost one, am restored: and from the exile of misery I am led back to the homeland of beatitude.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 45

O Lady, thou art our refuge in all our needs: and a most powerful force bruising and crushing our enemy.

The world is full of thy benefits: they surpass the heavens and penetrate the depths.

By the fullness of thy grace those who were in the abyss rejoice to find themselves liberated.

By the power of thy virginal fecundity, those who were above this world: rejoice to find themselves freed.

By the glorious Son of thy most holy virginity: men are made companions and fellow-citizens of the angels.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 46

All ye nations, clap your hands: sing in jubilee to the glorious Virgin.

For she is the gate of life, the door of salvation, and the way of our reconciliation.

The hope of the penitent: the comfort of those that weep: the blessed peace of hearts, and their salvation.

Have mercy on me, O Lady, have mercy on me: for thou art the light and the hope of all who trust in thee.

By thy salutary fecundity let it please thee: that pardon of my sins may be granted unto me.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 47

Great art thou, O Lady, and exceedingly to be praised: in the city of the God of Heaven: in the entire Church of His elect.

Thou hast ascended, hymned by the angelic choirs: buoyed by the archangels, crowned with lilies and roses.

Meet her, ye Powers and Principalities: go to welcome her, ye Virtues and Dominations.

Cherubim, and Thrones, and Seraphim, exalt her: and place her at the right hand of the Spouse, her most loving Son.

Oh, with how joyful a soul, with how serene an aspect hast thou received her, O God of angels and men: and given her the principality over every place of thy domination.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 48

Hear ye these things, all ye nations: give ear, all ye who desire to enter the kingdom of God.

Honor the Virgin Mary: and ye will find life and perpetual salvation.

Keep thy poor servants, O Lady: join them with a happy union to Christ.

By the fruit of thy womb, refresh and sustain the hunger of thy little ones.

For after thy bringing forth thou hast remained incorrupt: and after thy Son, inviolate.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 49

The God of gods hath spoken to Mary: by Gabriel, his messenger, saying:

Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: by thee the salvation of the world is repaired.

The Son of the Most High hath greatly desired thy beauty and thy comeliness.

Adorn thy bridal chamber, O Daughter of Sion: prepare to meet thy God.

Thou shalt conceive by the Holy Ghost: who will make thy delivery virginal and joyful.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 50

Have mercy on me, O Lady: for thou art called the Mother of Mercy.

And according to thy mercy: cleanse me from all my iniquities.

Pour forth thy grace upon me: and withdraw not from me thine accustomed clemency.

For I will confess my sins to thee: and I will accuse myself of all my crimes before thee.

Reconcile me to the Fruit of thy womb: and make peace for me with Him who has created me.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 51

Why dost thou glory in malice: O malignant serpent and infernal dragon?

Submit thy head to the Woman: by whose power thou art plunged into hell.

Crush him, O Lady, with the foot of thy power: arise and scatter his malice.

Extinguish his might: and reduce his strength to ashes,

That living, we may exult in thy name: and with joyful soul we may give praise to thee.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 52

The foolish enemy hath said in his soul: I will cast men out from the tabernacle of the sons of God.

I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of the serpent: and by the woman I will cast out the man, her husband.

O wretched one, as the heavens are exalted above the earth: so are the thoughts of God above thy thoughts.

Be not lifted up because of the woman's fall: for it is a woman who shall crush thy head.

Thou hast prepared a pit for her: and in her snare thou shalt be caught.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 53

O Lady, save me in thy name: and deliver me from my injustices.

That the craft of the enemy may not hurt me: hide me under the shadow of thy wings.

O my Lady, help me ! bestow thy grace upon my soul !

Willingly I will offer thee a sacrifice of praise: and I will give praise to thy name, for it is good.

For thou shalt deliver me from all tribulation: and my eye shall despise mine enemies.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 54

Hear my prayer, O Lady: and do not despise my supplications.

I am become sad in my thoughts: because the judgments of God have terrified me.

The darkness of death has overtaken me: and the fear of hell has invaded me.

But in solitude I will expect thy consolation: and in my chamber I will wait for thy mercy.

Glorify thy arm and thy right hand: that our enemies may be prostrated by us.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 55

Have mercy on me, O Lady, for my enemies have trodden upon me every day: all their thoughts are turned to evil against me.

Stir up fury, and be mindful of war: and pour out thy anger upon them.

Renew wonders and change marvelous things: let us feel the help of thine arm.

Glorify thy name upon us: that we may know that thy mercy is forever.

Distill upon us the drops of thy sweetness: for thou art the cupbearer of the sweetness of grace.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 56

Have mercy on me, O Lady, have mercy on me: for my heart is prepared to seek out thy will.

And I will rest in the shelter of thine arms: for sweet to me is thy refreshment.

Thy hands have distilled the first myrrh: and thy fingers the unguents of graces.

And a fragment of pomegranate is thy throat: and thy breath is sweet as an amalgam of choice smelling herbs.

For thou art the mother of fair love and the anchor of hope: the harbor of safety, indulgence or pardon, and the gate of salvation.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 57

If indeed you will truly speak justice: honor the Queen of justice and mercy.

For this belongs to the praise and the glory of the Savior: whatever of honor is bestowed upon the Mother.

The roses of martyrs surround thee, O Queen: and the lilies of virgins encompass thy throne.

Praise ye her, all together, ye morning stars: the seas and the rivers and the foundations of the world.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 58

Deliver me from mine enemies, O Lady of the world: arise to meet me, O Queen of piety.

The purest gold is thy ornament: the sardine stone and the topaz are thy diadem.

The jasper and the amethyst are in thy right hand: the beryl and the chrysolite in thy left.

The hyacinths are on thy breast: shining carbuncles are the jewels of thy bracelets.

Myrrh, frankincense, and balsam are on thy hands: the sapphire and the emerald on thy fingers.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 59

O God, thou hast cast us off because of our sins: thou hast had mercy on us by the Virgin Mary.

Intercede for us, O saving Mother of God: who hast brought forth salvation for men and angels.

For thou infusest joy into the sad: and joy and sweetness into the mourners.

Rejoice us by the sweet sounds of thy speech: and pour thy balm of roses forth into our hearts.

Thunder, ye heavens, from above, and give praise to her: glorify her, ye earth, with all the dwellers therein.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 60

Hear my prayer, O Lady: upon a firm rock establish my mind.

Be thou to me a tower of strength: protect me from the face of the cruel destroyer.

Be thou to him terrible as an army in battle array: and may he fall living into the depths of hell.

For thou art shining and terrible: a cloud full of dew, and the rising dawn.

Thou art beautiful and bright as the full moon: thy sacred aspect is as when the sun shines in its strength.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 61

O Lady, shall not my soul be subject to thee: who hast brought forth the Savior of all ?

Be mindful of us, O savior of the lost: hear thou the weeping of our hearts.

Pour forth graces from thy treasury: and with thine unguents soothe our grief.

Give us joy and peace: that thou mayest confound the enemies of the good.

Wash away all our sins: heal all our infirmities.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 62

O God, my God: I will glorify thee by Thy Mother.

For she hath conceived thee in virginity: and without travail she hath brought Thee forth.

Blessed be thou, O Lady: stand for us before the throne of God.

Beauty and brightness are in thy sight.

Keep my soul, O Lady: that it may never fall into sin.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 63

Hear my prayer, O Lady, when I beseech thee: from the fear of the cruel one deliver my soul.

Obtain for us peace and salvation: in the last day.

Blessed be thou above all women: and blessed be the fruit of thy womb.

Enlighten, O Lady, mine eyes: and illumine my blindness.

Give me firm confidence in thee: in my life and in mine end.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 64

A hymn becometh thee, O Lady, in Sion: praise and jubilation in Jerusalem.

The Lord hath given thee the blessing of all nations: praise and glory in the sight of all peoples.

The Lord hath blessed thee in His mercy: and hath set thy throne above all the orders of angels.

He hath placed grace and beauty in thy lips: and with a mantle of glory he hath clothed thy body.

He hath set a resplendent crown upon thy head: and hath adorned thee with the jewels of virtues.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 65

Shout with joy to Our Lady, all the earth: sing ye a psalm to her name: give honor to her majesty.

Blessed be thy heart, O Lady: with which thou hast ardently and sincerely loved the Son of God.

Look upon my poverty, O glorious Virgin: delay not to remove my misery and my difficulties.

Take away my tribulations: sweeten my weariness.

Let all flesh bless thee: let every tongue glorify thee.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 66

May God have mercy on us and bless us: by her who brought Him forth.

Have mercy on us, O Lady, and pray for us: turn our sadness into joy.

Enlighten me, O Star of the sea: shed thy brightness upon me, O resplendent

Virgin.

Extinguish the burning of my heart: refresh me with thy grace.

Let thy grace ever protect me: let thy presence give light to my end.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 67

Let Mary arise, and let her enemies be scattered: let them all be crushed beneath her feet.

Break thou the attack of our enemies: destroy all their iniquity.

To thee, O Lady, have I cried in my tribulation: and thou hast given serenity to my conscience.

Let not thy praise fail in our mouths: nor thy love in our hearts.

There is much peace to them that love thee, O Lady: their souls shall not see death forever.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 68

Save me, O Lady: for the waters of concupiscence have entered into my very soul.

I am stuck fast in the mire of sin: and the waters of pleasure have encompassed me.

Weeping, I have wept in the night: and the day of joy has arisen for me.

Save my soul, O Mother of the Savior: for by thee true salvation was given to the world.

While thou wast overshadowed when the Angel spoke to thee: and becamest pregnant with the Wisdom of the Father.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 69

O Lady, come to my assistance: and by the light of thy mercy enlighten me.

Teach us to seek thy goodness: that we may declare thy wonders.

Show forth thy power against our enemies: that thou mayest be praised among the distant nations.

In the flames of thy wrath let them be plunged into hell: and may they who trouble thy servants find perdition.

Have mercy on thy servants, upon whom thy name is invoked ! and do not permit them to be straitened in their temptations.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 70

In thee, O Lady, have I hoped: let me never be confounded: in thy mercy deliver me and free me.

Because of the multitude of my iniquities: I am vehemently oppressed.

Mine enemies have acted above my head: they have mocked me and derided me day by day.

See, O Lady, how I am troubled: stretch forth thy hands, and succor him who perishes.

Delay not, for the sake of the grace of thy name: and thou shalt become unto me joy and salvation.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 71

Give to the King thy judgment, O God: and thy mercy to the Queen, His Mother.

In thy hand are life and salvation: perpetual joy and glorious eternity.

Sprinkle my heart with thy sweetness: make me forget the miseries of this life.

Draw me after thee by the bands of thy mercy: and with the bandages of thy grace and loving kindness heal my pain.

Stir up in me a desire for Heaven: and inebriate my soul with the joy of Paradise.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 72

How good is God to Israel: to those who pay homage to His Mother and venerate her.

For she is our comfort: she is the most excellent of help in labor.

The enemy hath overspread my soul with darkness: O Lady, make light arise within me.

Let the wrath of God be turned away from me by thee: placate him by thy merits and thy prayers.

Stand for me in the day of judgment: in His presence take up my cause, and be my advocate.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 73

O Lady, why hast thou cast us off? and why wilt thou not help us in the day of tribulation?

Let my prayer come into thy sight: and despise not the voices of those who groan.

The enemy hath stretched his bow against us: he has strengthened his right hand, and there is no consoler.

Break for us the bonds of his malicious doings: and deliver us by thy right hand.

Drive him back into the place of perdition: let eternal damnation possess him.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 74

We will praise thee, O Lady: and we will praise thy name: make us to delight in thy praises.

Sing ye to her, ye dwellers upon earth: and announce her praise to the peoples.

Praise and magnificence are before her: fortitude and exultation are in her throne.

Adore ye her in her beauty: glorify the Maker of her beauty.

Be mindful in eternity of her mercy: keep in mind her virtues and her wonders.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 75

In Judea God is known: in Israel the honor of His Mother.

Sweet is the memory of her above honey and the honeycomb: and her love is above all aromatic perfumes.

Health and life are in her house: and in her dwelling are peace and eternal glory.

Honor her, ye heavens and earth: because the supreme artificer has wonderfully honored her.

Give to her praise, all ye creatures: and joyfully celebrate her astonishing mercy.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 76

With my voice I cried to the Lady: and by her grace she bowed down to me.

She hath taken sorrow and grief from my heart: and she hath soothed my heart by her sweetness.

She hath turned my fear into a sweet confidence: and by her honey-flowing aspect she hath calmed my mind.

By her holy help I have avoided the dangers of death: and I have escaped the cruel hand.

Thanks be to God and to thee, O loving Mother, for all things which I have obtained: for thy piety and thy mercy.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 77

Attend, O people of God, to His commandments: and forget not the Queen of grace.

Open your heart to search her out: and your lips to glorify her.

Let her love come down into your hearts: long to please her.

Her beauty outshines the sun and the moon: she is adorned with the ornaments of virtues.

Have mercy on me, O Queen of glory and honor: and keep my soul from all danger.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 78

O Lady, the heathen have come into the inheritance of God: which thou hast established in Christ by thy merits.

Let thy speech be sweet before Him: and unite me to Him who hath redeemed me.

Stretch forth thine arm against the cruel enemy: and unfold to me his craft.

Thy voice is sweet above every melody: the angelic harmony cannot be compared with it.

Drop down on me the sweetness of thy graces: and the fragrance of thy heavenly gifts.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 79

Give ear to me, thou who rulest Israel: praise thy Mother with me.

Arise and shake thyself from the dust, O my soul: go forth to meet the Queen of Heaven.

Loose the bands of thy neck, O poor little soul of mine: and welcome her with glorious praises.

The odor of life comes forth from her: and all salvation springs out of her heart.

By the sweet fragrance of her spiritual gifts: dead souls are raised to life.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 80

Rejoice to the Lady, our helper: sing aloud in the joy of your heart.

Let your affections be enkindled in her: and she will overwhelm your enemies with confusion.

Let us imitate her humility: her obedience and her meekness.

All graces shine forth in her: for her capacity was immense.

Run ye to her with holy devotion: and she will share her good things with you.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 81

God is in the congregation of Jews: from whom, as a rose, has come forth the Mother of God.

Wipe away my stains, O Lady: thou who art ever resplendent in purity.

Make the fountain of life flow into my mouth: whence the living waters take their rise and flow forth.

All ye who thirst, come to her: she will willingly give you to drink from her fountain.

He who drinketh from her, will spring forth unto life everlasting: and he will never thirst.

Glory be to the Father etc.

PSALM 82

O my Lady, who shall be like unto thee ? In grace and glory thou surpasses all.

As the heavens are above the earth: so art thou high above all, and exceedingly exalted.

Wound my heart with thy charity: make me worthy of thy grace and thy gifts.

May my heart melt in thy fear: and may the desire of thee enkindle my soul.

Make me desire thy honor and thy glory: that I may be received by thee into the peace of Jesus Christ.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 83

How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lady of hosts: how delightful are the tents of thy redemption.

Honor her, O ye sinners: and she will obtain grace and salvation for you.

Her prayer is incense above frank-incense and balsam: her supplications will not return to her bare, void, or empty.

Intercede for me, O Lady, with thy Christ: neither do thou forsake me in death or in life.

For thy spirit is kind: thy grace fills the whole world.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 84

O Lady, thou hast blessed thy house: thou hast consecrated thy dwelling.

This one is fair among the daughters of Jerusalem: whose memory is in blessing.

The holy angels have proclaimed her blessed: glorify her, ye Virtues and Dominations.

Ye peoples and nations, seek out her prudence: and search out the treasures of her mercy.

Think of her in goodness: and seek her in simplicity of heart.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 85

Incline thine ear, O Lady, and hear me: turn thy face to me, and have mercy on me.

May the inflowing of thy sweetness delight the souls of the saints: and the infusion of thy charity be sweet above the sweetest honey.

The resplendence of thy glory enlightens the mind: and the light of thy mercies leads to salvation.

The fountain of thy goodness inebriates the thirsty: and the aspect of thy countenance draws men away from sin.

To know thee and to learn thee is the root of immortality: and to declare thy virtues is the way of salvation.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 86

The foundations of life in the soul of the just: are to persevere in charity unto the end.

Thy grace raises up the poor man in adversity: and the invocation of thy name inspires him with confidence.

Paradise is filled with thy tender mercies: and by the fear of thee the infernal enemy is confounded.

He who hopes in thee, will find treasures of peace: and he who invokes thee not in this life, will not attain to the kingdom of God.

Grant, O Lady, that we may live in the grace of the Holy Ghost: and lead our souls to a holy end.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 87

Lady, thou art the helper of my salvation: by day and by night I have cried to thee.

Let my prayer enter into thy sight: console my sadness with the sight of thee.

Evils are multiplied in my soul: cleanse it from filth and sin.

May thy power overcome our enemies: lest they hinder our salvation.

Bestow on us thy grace to resist them: strengthen our hearts against the concupiscence of the flesh.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 88

Thy mercies, O Lady, I will sing forever.

With the ointment of thy tender mercy heal the broken in heart: and with the oil of thy mercy console our griefs.

May thy gracious countenance appear to me in my end: may the beauty of thy face rejoice my spirit in its going forth.

Stir up my spirit to love thy goodness: excite my mind to extol thy nobility and worth.

Deliver me from evil and tribulation: and from all sin keep thou my soul.

Glory be to the Father, etc

PSALM 89

O Lady, thou art made unto us refreshment: in all our needs.

The diffusion of thy grace produces thy holy operations in us: and the gentle dropping of thy sweetness maketh holy affections.

I will be mindful, O Lady, of thy tender mercies: I will sing unto thee a sacrifice of praise and a song of joy.

They who honor thee will obtain a perennial crown for ashes: and the mantle of praise for the spirit of mourning.

They who hope in thee will be clothed with light: joy and perpetual rejoicing will be their lot.

Glory be to the Father. etc.

PSALM 90

He that dwelleth in the help of the Mother of God: will abide under her protection.

The concourse of enemies will not harm him: the flying arrow will not touch him.

For she will deliver him from the snare of the hunter: and under her wings she will protect him.

Cry out to her in your dangers: and the scourge will not come nigh your dwelling.

He who has placed his hope in her, will find the fruit of grace: the gate of paradise will be opened to him.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 91

It is good to give praise to the Virgin Mary: and to sing glory to her is the prosperity of the mind.

To declare her merits rejoices the mind: and to imitate her works makes glad the angels of God.

He who obtains her favor: is recognized by the dwellers in Paradise.

And he who shall bear the character of her name, shall be written in the book of life.

Arise, O Lady, and judge our cause: and deliver us from those who rise up against us.

Withdraw not thy right hand from the sinner: and meet with thy sword the darts of the destroyer.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 92

The Lord hath reigned, He is clothed with beauty: He hath crowned His Mother with the ornaments of virtues.

May the Mother of peace fulfill in us his propitiation: and may she teach her servants the way of equity.

Ye who desire the wisdom of Christ: serve His Mother with a reverent soul.

Who will suffice to relate thy works, O Lady? and who shall search out the treasures of thy mercy?

Do thou uphold those who are fainting away in their temptations: and appoint them a lot in truth.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 93

The Lord is a God to whom revenge belongeth: but thou, O Mother of mercy, inclinest Him to mercy.

Thy magnificence, O Lady, is preached forever: and they who venerate thee shall find the way of peace.

Serve her reverently with rejoicing: and the Most Blessed Fruit of her womb shall heal you.

Look, O Lady, upon the humility of thy servants: and they shall praise thee in the generations of ages.

Magnify thy name in the multiplication of thy graces: and permit not thy servants to be subject to perils.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 94

Come, let us rejoice to Our Lady: let us joyfully sing to the saving Mary, our Queen.

Let us come before her presence with joy: and in canticles let us all praise her together.

Come, let us adore, and fall down before her: let us confess our sins to her with tears.

Obtain for us a full pardon, stand for us before the tribunal of God.

Receive our souls at our end: and lead us into eternal rest.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 95

Sing a new song to her who is full of grace: sing to Mary all ye of the earthly world.

For she excels in sanctity all the angels: and those born of women in her wonders and miracles.

Beauty and glory are in her countenance: and grace is in her eyes.

Bring ye to her glory, ye fathers o\$ the peoples: rejoice in her, all ye creatures of God.

You have an admirable exchange worked by her means: by reason of which you are called the sons of the Most High God.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 96

The Lord hath reigned, let Mary rejoice: in all the empire under her rule.

Adore her, all ye citizens of the heavenly commonwealth: exalt her, ye fair virgins, her daughters.

For she is raised above principalities and dominations: she is exalted above angels and the embassies of archangels.

Patriarchs and prophets, break forth in her praise: make a harmony,

Apostles and martyrs of Christ.

Confessors and virgins, sing canticles to her from the songs of Sion: and congratulate her, holy monks, for the triumphs she has won.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 97

Sing to Our Lady a new song: for she hath done wonderful things.

In the sight of nations she hath revealed her mercy: her name is heard even to the ends of the earth.

Be mindful, O Lady, of the poor and the wretched: and support them by the help of thy holy refreshment.

For thou, O Lady, art sweet and true: exceedingly patient and full of compassion.

Tread upon the enemies of our souls: and crush with thy holy arm their contumacy.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 98

The Lord hath reigned, let the people be angry: Mary sits at the right hand under the Cherubim.

Great in Sion is thy glory, O Lady: and in Jerusalem thy magnificence.

Sing before her, ye virginal choirs: and adore her throne, for it is holy.

In her right hand is the fiery law: and round about her are millions of saints.

Her commands are before his eyes: and the rule of justice is in her heart.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 99

Sing with joy to Our Lady, ye men of the earth: serve her in joy and pleasantness.

With all your soul draw nigh unto her: and in all your strength keep her ways.

Search her out, and she will be manifested to you: be clean of heart, and you will take hold of her.

To them whom thou shalt help, O Lady, will be the refreshment of peace: and they from whom thou turnest away thy face shall have no hope of salvation.

Be mindful of us, O Lady, and let evil not take hold of us: help us in the end, and we shall find eternal life.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 100

To thee, O Lady, will I sing mercy and judgment: I will sing to thee in joy of heart, when thou shalt have made my soul glad.

I will praise thee and thy glory: and thou shalt bestow refreshment upon my soul.

I have been zealous for thy love and thy honor: therefore wilt thou defend my cause before the judge of ages.

I am drawn by thy goodness and grace: I pray thee, let me not be defrauded of my hope and good confidence.

Strengthen thou my soul in my last days: and in this my flesh make me to behold my Savior.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 101

O Lady, hear my prayer: and let my cry come unto thee.

Turn not thy sacred countenance away from me: nor hate me because of my uncleanness.

Forsake me not in the thought and counsel of mine enemies: and permit me not to fall in their wicked attacks.

Those who trust in thee, will not fear the tortuous snake: and those who exalt thee in praises will escape the hand of Acheron.

By thy virginal conception give me a good confidence in thee: and by thy admirable delivery rejoice my soul.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 102

Bless, O my soul, the Mother of Jesus Christ: and all that is within me, glorify her name.

Forget not her benefits: nor her grace and consolation.

By her grace sins are forgiven: and by her mercy maladies are healed.

Bless her, all ye powers of Heaven: glorify her, ye choirs of the Apostles and Prophets.

Bless her, O ye sea, and the islands of the nations: sing a hymn to her, all ye heavens and the dwellers therein.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 103

Bless, O my soul, the Virgin Mary: her honor and her magnificence forever.

Thou hast clothed thyself with beauty and comeliness: thou art clad, O

Lady, with a shining garment.

From thee proceeds the healing of sins: and the discipline of peace, and the fervor of charity.

Fill us, thy servants, with holy virtues: and let the wrath of God not come nigh unto us.

Give eternal joy to thy servants: and forget them not in the death struggle.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 104

Give praise to Our Lady and call upon her name: sing gloriously unto her, declaring her virtues.

Praise and exalt her, O Virgins, daughters of Sion: because she will espouse to you the King of Angels.

Honor ye the Queen full of all grace: and contemplate with reverence her most holy countenance.

Eternal salvation is in thy hand, O Lady: those who honor thee worthily will receive it.

Thy clemency will not fail in the eternal years: and thy mercy is from generation to generation.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 105

Give praise to Our Lady, for she is good: in all the tribes of the earth relate her mercies.

Far from the impious is her conversation: her foot has not declined from the way of the Most High.

A fountain of fertilizing grace comes forth from her mouth: and a virginal emanation sanctifying chaste souls.

The hope of the glory of Paradise is in her heart: for the devout soul who shall have honored her.

Have mercy on us, O resplendent Queen of Heaven: and give consolation from thy glory.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 106

Give praise to the Lord, for He is good: give praise to His Mother, for her mercy endureth for ever.

Show us, O Lady, the innocence and the way of prudence: and point out the way of understanding to thy servants.

The fear of God enlightens the mind: and thy love rejoices it.

Blessed is the man whose speech is pleasing to thee: his bones shall be fattened with marrow and fatness.

Thy word shall uphold the feeble soul: and thy lips shall refresh the thirsty soul.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 107

My heart is ready, O Lady, my heart is ready: to sing praises to thee and to chant.

Greater is thy love than all riches: and thy grace is above gold and precious stones.

Beatitude and justice are given by God: for those who turn away from their sins to thee shall obtain the remedy of penance.

Thy fruits are grace and peace: and those who please thee shall be far from perdition.

Be to us a shade of protection in our temptations: let the spreading of thy wings defend us from him who devours.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 108

O Lady, despise not my praise: and deign to accept this Psalter dedicated to thee.

Look upon the will of my heart: and make my affection well-pleasing to thee.

Hasten to visit thy servants: under the protection of thy hand may they be preserved unhurt.

May they receive through thee the illumination of the Holy Spirit: and refreshment against the heat of cupidity.

Heal, O Lady, the contrite of heart: and revive them by the ointment of piety.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 109

The Lord said to Our Lady: Sit at my right hand, O my Mother!

Goodness and sanctity have pleased thee: therefore thou shalt reign with me forever.

The crown of immortality is on thy holy head: whose brightness and glory shall not be extinguished.

Have mercy on us, O Lady, mother of light and splendor: enlighten us, O Lady of truth and virtue.

From thy treasures pour into us the wisdom of God: and the understanding of prudence, and the model of discipline.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 110

I will give praise to thee, O Lady, with my whole soul: I will glorify thee with my whole mind.

The works of thy grace will remain: and the testament of thy mercy before the throne of God.

By thee redemption has been sent from God: the repentant people shall have the hope of salvation.

A good understanding to all who honor thee: and their lot is among the angels of peace.

Glorious and admirable is thy name: those who keep it will not fear in the moment of death.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 111

Blessed is the man who feareth the Lady: and blessed is the heart that loves her.

Happy the man who is never satiated with thy praise: and grows not weary of the narration of thy virtues.

In his heart has arisen the light of God: the Holy Spirit enlightens his understanding.

Bestow, O Lady, thy grace upon thy poor: revive the hungry and the needy.

By thee names shall be in eternal remembrance: our heart shall not fear the evil hearing.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 112

Praise, ye children, the Mother of God: ye old men, glorify her name.

Blessed be Mary, the Mother of Christ: for she is the way to the homeland of sanctity.

Her throne is high above the Cherubim: her throne is above the hinges of heaven.

Her countenance is upon the humble: and her looks upon those who trust in her.

Her mercy is over all flesh: and her almsgiving until the ends of the earth.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 113

In the going forth of my soul from this world: meet it, O Lady, and receive it.

Console it with thy holy countenance: let not the sight of the demons terrify it.

Be to it a ladder to Heaven: and a straight way to the Paradise of God.

Obtain for it from the Father the pardon of peace: and a throne of light among the servants of God.

Uphold the devout before the tribunal of Christ: take their cause into thy hands.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 114

I have loved the Mother of the Lord my God: and the light of her compassions she hath shined upon me.

The sorrows of death have encompassed me: and the visitation of Mary hath rejoiced me.

I have incurred grief and danger: and I have been recreated by her grace.

Let her name and her memory be in the midst of our heart: and the blow of the malignant will not injure us.

Be converted, my soul, unto her praise: and thou shalt find refreshment in thy last end.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 115

I believed, therefore I have spoken: thy glory, O Lady, to the whole world.

Have compassion on my soul, and guide it: deign in thy good pleasure to take possession of it.

Assign to it the testament of thy peace and thy love: give to it the memory of thy name.

Of the blessing of thy womb give me support: and from the fatness of thy grace sweeten my soul. Break thou the bonds of my sins: and with thy virtues adorn the face of my soul.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 116

Praise ye our Lady, all ye nations: glorify her, all ye peoples.

For her grace and her mercy are confirmed upon us: and her truth remaineth forever.

He who shall worthily have venerated her, will be justified: but he who shall have neglected her, will die in his sins.

The lips of angels shall relate her wisdom: and all the citizens of Paradise will sing her praises.

Those who approach her with a good soul: will not be seized by the devastating angel.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 117

Give praise to the Lord, for He is good: give praise to His Mother, for her mercy endureth forever.

The love of her driveth out sin from the heart: and her grace purifieth the conscience of the sinner.

The way to come to Christ is to approach her: he who shall fly her shall not find the way of Peace.

Let him who is hardened in sins, often call upon her: and light shall arise in his darkness.

He who is sad in his heart, let him cry out to her: and he will be inebriated with a sweet-flowing dew.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 118

Blessed are the undefiled in the way: who imitate the Mother of God.

Blessed are the imitators of her humility: blessed are the sharers in her charity.

Blessed are the searchers into her virtues: blessed are they who are conformed to her image.

Blessed are they who venerate her conception and her birth: blessed are they who devoutly serve her.

Blessed are they who have hope and confidence in her: blessed are they who receive through her eternal happiness.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 118A

Give bountifully to thy servant, O Lady: enliven me, and I shall do thy will.

I am a sojourner on the earth: hide nothing of thy love from me.

My soul hath longed to desire thy praise: at all times.

For thou art my salvation in the Lord: who hast delivered me, one condemned to death.

What shall I give back for these things, except my whole self ? O Lady receive me.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 118B

Set before me for a law, O Lady, the holy of holies of thy will: and I shall always seek after it.

Lead me into the path of thy tender mercies, O most beautiful of women: for this same have I desired.

Incline my soul to the love of those above, O Lady: and not to unchasteness.

Behold I have coveted thy chastity from my youth up: in thy mercy strengthen me.

And I will keep the way of thy testimonies forever: and I will search out the commandments of thy Son, which I have loved.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 118C

Be mindful of thy word, O Princess of all ladies: in which thou hast given me hope.

In the stormy waves of tempests it hath powerfully held me: for thy word hath quickened me.

Lying men have surrounded me, and scourges are gathered together upon me: and behold thy hand hath delivered me.

I have communicated all good things to them that fear thee: and to those who earnestly kept thy commandments.

The earth is full of thy tender mercies: therefore, have I sought out the way of thy justifications.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 118D

Thou hast done well with thy servant, O Lady: and because of this the angels rejoice.

Teach me the discipline of thy manners and thy equity: because I have believed in thy words above all others.

It is good for me that with thy burden thou hast humbled me: that I may follow thy conversation.

Those who love thy servants, shall be venerated: but he who shall hate them, will fall in eternity.

Let the drops of thy clemency ever fall upon me from above, and I shall live: for thy holy law is my meditation.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 118E

My soul hath fainted in thy ways, O Lady: and unless thou didst have the greatest compassion on me, I should indeed have perished in my weakness.

My eyes have failed in thy contemplation: like a bottle in the frost my soul has been before thee.

According to thy goodness quicken thou me: and I shall not forget thy words, because to cling to thee is good.

By thy ruling the world goes on: which thou together with God hast founded from the beginning.

I am all thine, o Lady; save me: for thy praises were desirable to me in the time of my pilgrimage.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 118F

How have I loved thy law, O Lady: it is forever in my sight.

The abundance of thy sweetness has drawn my heart out of me: and my flesh hath wonderfully rejoiced in thee.

How sweet to sinners are thy words, O Lady: above all melody thy refection is sweet to my mouth.

Thy word is a light to my steps: and an ineffable illumination to my paths.

How often have sinners of hell exasperated me, because I would not stray from thy charity: but in thee, O Lady have I hoped.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 118G

I have hated the unjust: and I have loved thy way, O gracious Lady.

Help me, O Lady of the world, and I shall be saved: and I shall meditate the honor of thy commandments.

Make me always stand in thy fear: and deliver me not up, O Virgin, to those who calumniate me.

I am of thy own tongue: I am the least in thy family.

Keep me, O Lady, from those who neglect the judgments of thy justice.

Thou despisest all who depart from thy service: because their thought is unjust.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 118H

Wonderful are thy testimonies, O kind Mother: and by thy words my heart is enlightened.

All the rich of the people shall entreat thy countenance: and the daughters of kings shall praise thy face.

The word of thy lips is burning exceedingly: He who shall make haste to come to thee, shall share in it.

I am as a trembling reed before thee: hold me, Lady, under thy yoke, and I shall not be confounded.

The dragons of hell attack thy servants above all others: but do thou, O Lady, defend us.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 118 I

I have cried out to thee with my whole heart, O Lady: mercifully deliver me from my necessities.

Hear the voice of my groaning, O my Lady: teach me what is acceptable to thee at all times.

Salvation is far from those who know thee not: but he who perseveres in thy service is far from perdition.

Thy mercy rules all things: O Lady, in thy salvation quicken me.

The beginning of thy words is truth at all times: and I have not forgotten thine immaculate law.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 118J

Princes have persecuted me without cause: and the wicked spirit fears the invocation of thy name.

There is much peace to them that keep thy name, O Mother of God: and to them there is no stumbling-block.

At the seven hours I have sung praises to thee, O Lady: according to thy word give me understanding.

Let my prayer come into thy sight, that I may not forsake thee, O Lady, all the days of my life: for thy ways are mercy and truth.

I will long forever to praise thee, O Lady: when thou shalt have taught me thy justifications.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 119

I cried to Our Lady when I was in trouble: and she heard me.

Lady, deliver us from all evil: all the days of our life.

Crush the head of our enemies: with the insuperable power of thy foot.

As thy spirit hath rejoiced in God thy Savior: so do thou deign to pour true joy into my heart.

Approach to Our Lord to pray for us: that by thee our sins may be blotted out.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 120

To thee I have raised mine eyes, O Mother of Christ: by whom comfort cometh to all flesh.

Bestow on us thy help and thy grace: in all our tribulations.

Keep us, O Lady: lest we be caught in the snare of sinners.

The pupil of thine eye neither slumbers nor sleeps: that we may always be kept under thy protection.

The tongues of men and angels praise thee: and before thee every knee shall bow.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 121

I rejoiced in thee, O Queen of Heaven: because under thy leadership we shall go into the house of the Lord.

Jerusalem the heavenly city: may we attain to the rewards of Mary.

Obtain for us, O Lady, peace and pardon: and the victory over our enemies, and triumph.,

Strengthen and console our hearts: by the sweetness of thy piety.

So, Lady, pour into us thy mercy: that we may devoutly die in the Lord.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 122

To thee have I raised up mine eyes, O Queen: who reignest in Heaven.

Let our help be in the power of thy name: let all our works be directed by thee.

Blessed be thou in Heaven and on earth: in the sea and in all abysses.

Blessed be thy fecundity: blessed be thy virginity and purity.

Blessed be thy holy body: blessed be thy most holy soul.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 123

Unless our Lady was in us: many dangers would have overtaken us.

O Virgin, be our defender: and a propitious advocate before God.

Show us, O Lady, thy mercy: and strengthen us in thy holy service.

Let the holy angels bless thee in Heaven: let all men bless thee upon earth.

Give not up to the beasts the souls of them that trust in thee: let not the mouths of them that sing to thee be closed.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 124

Those who trust in thee, O Mother of God: shall not fear at the face of the enemy.

Rejoice and exult, all ye who love her: because she will help you in the day of your trouble.

Be mindful of thy tender mercies, O Lady: and relieve us in the pilgrimage of our sojourning.

Turn thine amiable countenance towards us: confound and destroy all our enemies.

Blessed be all the works of thy hands, O Lady: blessed be all thy holy miracles.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 125

When thou shalt turn thy most serene countenance upon us: thou shalt rejoice us, O virginal Mother of God.

Blessed be thou, O treasury of Christ: above all women upon earth.

Blessed be thy glorious name: which the mouth of the Lord hath wonderfully named.

Let not thy praise fail from our lips: nor thy charity from our hearts.

Those who love thee will be blessed by God: and those who wish to love thee, will not be defrauded of their confidence.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 126

Unless, O Lady, thou shalt build the house of our heart: its edifice shall not remain.

Build us up by thy grace and thy power: that we may remain firm forever.

Blessed be thy word: and blessed be all the words of thy lips.

Let them be blessed by God, who shall bless thee: and let them be reckoned in the number of the just. Bless, O Lady, them that bless thee: and never turn thy gracious countenance away from them.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 127

Blessed are all they who fear our Lady: and blessed are all they who know how to do thy will and thy good pleasure.

Blessed are the father and mother who have begotten thee: whose memory shall abide forever.

Blessed is the womb that bore thee: and blessed are the breasts that nourished thee.

Turn thou thy mercy toward us: and be gracious to thy servants.

Look upon us and behold our shame: take away from us all our iniquities.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 128

My enemies have often troubled me from my youth up: deliver me, O Lady, and vindicate my cause from them.

Give them not power over my soul: keep my interior and my exterior.

Obtain for us pardon for our sins: let it be given to us by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Make us do penance worthily and praiseworthily: that we may come to God by a blessed end.

Show us then with a gracious and serene countenance: the glorious fruit of thy womb.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 129

Out of the depths I have cried to thee, O Lady: Lady, hear my prayer.

Let thine ears be attentive: to the voice of praise and of thy glorification.

Deliver me from the hand of my adversaries: confound their plans and their attempts against me.

Deliver me in the evil day: and in the day of death forget not my soul.

Lead me unto the harbor of salvation: may my name be written among the just.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 130

Lady, my heart hath not been exalted: nor have mine eyes been lifted up.

The Lord hath blessed thee in His power: who by thee hath reduced to naught our enemies.

Blessed be He who hath sanctified thee: and who hath brought thee forth pure from thy mother's womb.

Blessed be He who hath overshadowed thee: and by His grace hath given thee fecundity.

Bless us, O Lady, and strengthen us in thy grace: that by thee we may be presented before the sight of the Lord.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 131

Be mindful, O Lady, of David: and of all who invoke thy name.

Give us confidence in thy name: and let our adversaries be confounded.

Console us in the land of our pilgrimage: and relieve our poverty.

Give us, O holy Virgin, the bread of tears: and sorrow for our sins in the land of our sojourning.

Make the Blessed Fruit of thy womb propitious to us: that we may be filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 132

Behold how good and how pleasant, O Mary, it is: to love thy name.

Thy name is as oil poured out, and as an aromatic fragrance: to those who love it.

How great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lady: which thou hast prepared for those who love and hope in thee.

Be a refuge to the poor in tribulation: because thou art a staff to the poor and wretched.

Let them, I beseech thee, find grace with God: who invoke thy help in their needs.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 133

Behold now, bless ye the Lady: all ye who hope in her holy name.

Rejoice with a great joy, you who exalt and glorify her: because you will be rejoiced by the plentifulness of her consolations.

Behold now with an overflowing bounty she will come down upon you: to console and to make glad your hearts.

Bless her, all her servants: and let her memory be the desire of your soul.

Bless her, all ye angels and saints of God: praise her wonders forever.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 134

Praise the name of the Lord: bless the name of Mary, His Mother.

Be diligent in prayer to Mary: and she will raise up for you eternal delights.

Let us come to her in a contrite soul: and sinful cupidity will not besiege us.

He who thinks of her in tranquillity of mind: shall find sweetness and the rest of peace.

Let us breathe forth our souls to her in our end: and she will lay open to us the courts of them that triumph.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 135

Give praise to the Lord, for He is good: because by His most sweet Mother, the Virgin Mary, mercy is given to us.

Obtain for us, O Lady, the friendship of Jesus Christ: and keep us lest we should lose our innocence.

Repress our enemy by thy command: lest he should destroy in us the virtue of charity.

Illumine our ways and our paths: that we may know what is pleasing to God.

Preserve in us what is naturally good: and may good graces be multiplied in us.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 136

On the rivers of Babylon the Hebrews wept: but let us weep over our sins.

Let us cry out humbly to the Virgin and Mother: let us offer her our complaints and our sighs.

There is no propitiation to be found without her: nor salvation apart from her fruit.

By her, sins are purged away: and by her fruit, souls are made white.

By her is made satisfaction for sins; by her fruit health is bestowed.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 137

I will praise thee, O Lady, with my whole heart: because by thee I have experienced the clemency of Jesus Christ.

Hear, O Lady, my words and prayers: and in the sight of angels I will sing praise to thee.

In whatever day thou shalt invoke me, hear me: and multiply thy power in my soul.

Let all tribes and tongues praise thee: because by thee salvation is restored to us.

From all trouble save thy servants: and make them live under thy protection and peace.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 138

O Lady, thou hast tried me and known me: my ruin and my transgression.

Thy mercy is plentiful above me: and thy clemency is great to me.

Thine eye hath beheld mine imperfect being: and thine eyebrows have known my ways.

We have from the Holy Spirit an abundance of holy desires: and the stain of sin does not trouble our conscience.

The light of thy mercy makes serene our heart: and the sweetness of thy peace recreates us.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 139

Deliver me, O Lady, from all evil: and from the infernal enemy defend me.

Against me he hath drawn his bow: and in his craftiness he hath laid snares for me.

Restrain his evil power: and powerfully crush his craft.

Turn back his iniquity on his own head: and let him speedily fall into the pit which he hath made.

But we will rejoice in thy service: and we will glory in thy praise.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 140

O Lady, I have cried to thee, hear me: incline unto my prayer and to my supplication.

Let my supplication be directed as incense before thy face: both in the time of the evening sacrifice and in the morning.

Let not my heart turn aside into spiteful words: and let not the thought of wickedness upset my mind.

Make me submissive to the good pleasure of thy heart: and let me be conformed to thy actions.

With the sword of understanding pierce my heart: and with the dart of charity inflame my mind.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 141

With my voice I have cried to Our Lady: I have humbly entreated her.

I have poured out my tears in her sight: and I have set before her my grief.

The enemy lieth in wait for my heel: he has spread his net before me.

Help me, O Lady, lest I fall before him: let-him be crushed beneath my feet.

Lead my soul out of prison: that it may praise thee and sing to the mighty

God forever.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 142

O Lady, hear my prayer: incline thine ear to my supplication.

The spiteful enemy hath persecuted my life: he hath cast on to the ground my ways.

He hath blackened me with his darkness: and my spirit is exceedingly troubled.

Turn not thy face away from me: that I may not fall together with them that tumble into the abyss.

Send forth thy light and thy grace: and repair anew my life and my conscience.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 143

Blessed be thou, O Lady, who teachest thy servants to fight: and strengthenest them against the enemy.

With thy lightnings and thy brightness scatter him: send forth thy darts, that thou mayest confound him.

Glorify from on high thy hand: and let thy servants sing thy praise and thy glory.

Raise up from earthly things our affection: from these eternal delights refresh our interior.

Kindle in our hearts the longing for heavenly things: and deign to refresh us with the joys of Paradise.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 144

I will exalt thee, O Mother of the Son of God: and every day I will sing thy praises.

Generations and peoples will praise thy works: and the islands shall expect thy mercy.

The angels will utter the abundance of thy sweetness: and the saints will pronounce thy sweetness.

Our eyes hope in thee, O Lady: send us food and delightful nourishment.

My tongue shall speak thy praise: and I will bless thee for ever and ever.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 145

My soul, praise Our Lady: I will glorify her as long as I live.

Never cease from her praises: and think of her every moment.

When my spirit shall go forth, Lady, let it be commended to thee: and in the unknown land be thou its guide.

Let not past sins trouble it: nor let it be disturbed by the meeting with the malignant one.

Lead it to the harbor of salvation: there let it await securely the coming of the Redeemer.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 146

Praise the Lady, for a psalm is good: let the praise of her be pleasant and beautiful.

For she heals the broken-hearted: and she refreshes them with the ointment of piety.

Great is her power: and her clemency has no end.

Sing to her in jubilation: and in her praise sing a psalm to her.

Those who hope in the Lord are a good pleasure to her: and those who hope in her mercy.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 147

Praise, O Jerusalem, Our Lady: glorify her also, O Sion.

For she buildeth up thy walls: and blesseth thy sons.

Let her grace nourish thee: let her give peace to thy borders.

The Most High hath sent forth His Word: and His power hath overshadowed her.

Let us raise our hearts and hands up to her: that we may feel her influence.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 148

Let us praise Our Lady in the heavens: glorify her in the highest.

Praise her, all ye men and beasts: birds of the air, and fishes of the sea.

Praise her, sun and moon: stars, and the orbs of the planets.

Praise her, Cherubim and Seraphim: thrones and dominations and powers.

Praise her, all ye legions of angels: praise her all order of heavenly dwellers.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 149

Sing a new song to Our Lady: her praise in the congregation of the just.

Let the heavens rejoice in her glory: the isles of the sea and the whole world.

Fire and water praise her: cold and heat, splendor and light.

Let her praises be in the mouth of the just: and her glory in the band of the triumphant.

City of God, be joyful in her: and for thy dwellers sing her a constant song.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

PSALM 150

Praise Our Lady in her saints: praise her in her virtues and miracles.

Praise her, ye bands of Apostles: praise her, ye choirs and patriarchs and prophets.

Praise her, ye army of martyrs; praise her, ye bands of doctors and confessors.

Praise her in the college of virgins and the chaste: praise her, ye orders of monks and holy anchorites.

Praise her, ye monasteries of all religious: praise her, all the souls of all heavenly dwellers. Let every spirit praise Our Lady I

Glory be to the Father, etc.

CANTICLES IN HONOR OF MARY

A CANTICLE ON THE MODEL OF ISAIAS (XII)

I will praise thee, O Lady, because by thee the Lord has been rendered favorable unto me: and has consoled me.

Behold, Lady, thou art my savior: I will deal confidently in thee, and will not be confounded.

For thou art my strength and my praise in the Lord: and thou hast become salvation unto me.

I will draw waters in joy from the rivulet: and I will always invoke thy name.

Make known among the peoples the virtues of Our Lady: for her name is exceedingly sublime.

Exalt her and praise her, all the human race: because the Lord my God has given to thee such a mediatrix.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

A CANTICLE LIKE THAT OF EZECHIAS (IS. XXXVIII)

I have said in the midst of my days: I will go to Mary, that she may reconcile me to Christ.

I have sought the residue of my years: in the bitterness of my soul.

My generation is taken away: because my father and mother and all have forsaken me: but Mary hath taken me up.

I hoped in her in the morning, in the evening, and at midday: as a lion she hath broken all the bones of my sins.

And thou, O Lady, hast delivered my soul, that it should not be lost: and my only one from the hand of the dog.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

A CANTICLE LIKE THAT OF ANNA

My heart has rejoiced in the Lord: and my heart has exalted in my Lady.

For He who is mighty has done great things to me: by Mary His Mother.

There is no one holy as is Our Lady: who alone hath surpassed all.

Let the old things depart from our mouth: and let us speak with new tongues.

Exalt and praise Mary, O Sion and Jerusalem: for she is great amongst the ladies of Israel.

She makes poor and she enriches: she humbles and she exalts.

She is higher than the heavens: she is wider than the earth: is this Lady of ours.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

A CANTICLE LIKE THAT OF MARY (EXOD. XV)

Let us sing to Our Lady, the glorious Virgin Mary: let us bless her in hymns and praises.

The name of Our Lady is omnipotent after that of God: she hath cast the chariot of Pharaoh and his army into the sea.

Thy right hand, O Lady, is magnified in strength: because in the multitude of thy mercies thou hast prostrated mine adversaries.

Thou hast delivered me, O Lady, from the mouth of the lion: and as the mother her new-born infant hast thou received me.

O my most dear Lady: like the hen, cover me with thy wonderful protection.

I am all thine: and all my things are thine, Virgin blessed above all.

I will place thee as a seal upon my heart: because thy love is strong as death.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

A CANTICLE LIKE HABACUC'S (III)

O Lady, I have heard thy hearing: and I was astonished: I have considered thy works, and I have feared.

Lady, thy work: in the midst of the years thou hast quickened it.

I will praise thee, O Lady: for thou hast hidden these things from the wise, and hast revealed them to little ones.

Thy glory hath covered the heavens: and the earth is full of thy mercy.

Thou hast gone forth, O Virgin, in the salvation of thy people: to their salvation with Christ.

O blessed one, in thy hands is laid up our salvation: be mindful, O loving one, of our poverty.

He whom thou wilt save, will be saved: and he from whom thou shalt turn away thy face, will go down to destruction.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

A CANTICLE LIKE THAT OF MOSES (DEUT. XXXII)

Hear, ye heavens, what I shall speak of Mary: let the earth hear the words of my mouth.

Magnify her together with me: and let us exalt her name forever and ever.

O wicked and perverse generation: acknowledge our Lady for thy salvatrix.

Is she not thy mother, who hath possessed thee: and generated thee in faith?

If thou leavest her, thou art not the friend of the supreme Caesar: for without her He will not save thee.

Would that thou couldst understand, and be wise: and provide for thy last end!

As an infant without a nurse cannot live: so thou canst not have salvation without Our Lady.

Let thy soul thirst for her, hold her, and do not let her go: until she has blessed thee.

Let thy mouth be filled with her praises: sing her magnificence the whole day long.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

A CANTICLE LIKE THAT OF THE THREE CHILDREN

Bless, all works, our glorious Lady: praise and superexalt her forever.

Bless our Lady, ye Angels: ye heavens, bless our Lady.

Let every creature bless our Lady: whom the King wishes thus to be blessed.

Blessed be thou, O daughter of the most High King: who by thy fragrance surpasses all lilies.

Blessed be thou, crown of all ladies: blessed be thou, glory of Jerusalem.

Thy odor is like a full field which the Lord hath blessed: which overflows on those who bless thee, watering their whole souls and minds.

Whosoever shall bless thee, O Blessed Virgin: let him be blessed forever.

He who shall curse thee, O most white rose: let him be accursed.

Let not the abundance of wine and oil: depart from the house of thy servants.

In thy name let every knee bow: in Heaven, on earth, and in hell.

Let us bless God, who hath created thee: blessed be both thy parents who have begotten thee.

Blessed be thou, O Lady, in Heaven and on earth: worthy of praise, and glorious and superexalted forever.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

A CANTICLE LIKE THAT OF ZACHARIAS (LUKE I)

Blessed be thou, O Lady and Mother of my God of Israel: who by thee hath quickened and hath wrought the redemption of His people.

And hath raised up a horn of salvation of thy chastity: in the house of David, His servant.

As he spoke by the mouth of Isaias: and others of his holy prophets.

Give us salvation from our enemies, O Virgin of virgins: from the hand of those who hate us, give us peace.

And do thy mercy for us and our relations: that thou mayest be mindful of the testament of the Almighty God,

Which he hath sworn to our fathers: to Abraham and his seed forever;

That thus, being delivered from the hand of our enemies: we may serve Him in peace.

In sanctity and justice before thee: all our days.

And thou, O Mary, shalt be called the Prophet of God: for thou hast known that He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid.

By whom He hath given the knowledge of salvation to His people: in the remission of their sins.

By the bowels of the multitude of thy mercies: visit us, O Morning Star, the Orient from on high.

Enlighten the darknesses of those who sit in the shadow of death, and deign to instill into them the light of thy most Beloved Son.

Have mercy, O Mother of Mercies, on us miserable sinners, who neglect to do penance for our past sins: and daily commit so much that deserves penance.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

HYMN AFTER THE MODEL OF THE “TE DEUM”

We praise thee, O Mother of God: we confess thee, Mary, ever Virgin.

Thou art the Spouse of the Eternal Father: the whole earth venerates thee.

Thee all angels and archangels, thrones and principalities serve.

Thee all powers and all virtues of Heaven: and all dominations obey.

Before thee all the angelic choirs: the Cherubim and Seraphim exulting stand.

With unceasing voice every angelic creature proclaims thee:

Holy, holy, holy: Mary, Mother of God and Virgin !

Full are the heavens and the earth: of the majesty and glory of the fruit of thy womb.

Thee the glorious choir of Apostles: praise as the Mother of their Creator.

Thee the white-robed multitude of blessed martyrs: glorify as the Mother of Christ.

Thee the glorious army of Confessors: style the Temple of the Trinity.

Thee the amiable choir of holy virgins: preaches as the example of virginity and humility.

Thee the whole heavenly court: honoureth as Queen.

The Church, invoking thee, calls thee throughout the whole world: Mother of the Divine Majesty.

Venerating thee as the true Mother of the heavenly King: holy, sweet, and loving.

Thou art the Lady of Angels: thou art the gate of Paradise.

Thou art the ladder of glory: and of the heavenly kingdom.

Thou art the bridal chamber: thou art the ark of piety and grace.

Thou art the vein of mercy: thou art the Spouse and the Mother of the Eternal King.

Thou art the temple of the treasury of the Holy Ghost: thou art the noble throne of the whole blessed Trinity.

Thou art the Mediatrix of God, and the lover of men: the heavenly Illuminatrix of mortal men.

Thou art the inspirer of the warriors, the advocate of the poor: the compassionate refuge of sinners.

Thou art the distributrix of gifts: the barrier against demons and the proud, and their fear.

Thou art the Lady of the world, the Queen of Heaven: after God our only hope.

Thou art the salvation of them that call upon thee: the harbor of the shipwrecked, the solace of the wretched, the refuge of those who perish.

Thou art the Mother of all the blessed, full of joy after God: the comfort of all the dwellers in Heaven.

Thou art the promotrix of the just, the one who gathers together those who stray: the promise of the patriarchs.

Thou art the truth of the prophets, the herald and teacher of the Apostles: the Mistress of the Evangelists.

Thou art the strength of martyrs, the example of confessors: the honor and the festivity of virgins.

Thou hast received into thy womb the Son of God: to deliver exiled man.

By thee is driven out the ancient enemy: and the kingdoms of Heaven are opened to believers.

Thou sittest together with thy Son: at the right hand of the Father.

Do thou intercede for us, O Virgin Mary: with Him who we believe will come to judge us.

We beseech thee, therefore, help us, thy servants: who have been redeemed with the Precious Blood of Thy Son.

Save thy people, O Lady: that we may be partakers of the inheritance of Thy

Son.

And rule us: and keep us forever.

Day by day, O loving one: we salute thee.

And we desire to praise thee forever: with both mind and voice.

Deign, O sweet Mary, now and forever: to keep us without sin.

Have mercy on us, O loving one: have mercy on us.

Let thy great mercy be upon us: because we trust in thee, O Virgin Mary.

In thee, O sweet Mary, we hope: do thou defend us forever.

Praise becometh thee; empire is thine: to thee be power and glory forever.

Amen.

A MARIAN CREED AFTER THE MANNER OF THAT OF ST. ATHANASIUS

Whoever wishes to be saved, before all must hold a firm faith as to Mary.

Which unless anyone shall keep whole and inviolate: without doubt he shall perish forever.

For she alone, remaining a virgin, hath brought forth: she alone hath destroyed all heresies.

Let the Jew be confounded and ashamed: who says that Christ was born from the seed of Joseph.

Let the Manichean be confounded who says: that Christ has an unreal body.

Let all be ashamed who say: that He derives His Body from any other source than Mary.

For the very same Son, who is the only-begotten of the Father in the
Godhead: is the true and only begotten Son of the Virgin Mary.

In Heaven without a mother: on earth without a father.

For as the rational soul and the flesh because of the union in man is truly born from man: so Christ, both God and Man, is truly begotten by Mary, the Virgin.

Clothing Himself with flesh from the flesh of the Virgin: because so it behooved the human race to be redeemed.

Who according to the Divinity is equal to the Father: but according to His Humanity is less than the Father.

Conceived of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and announced by the Angel: but nevertheless the Holy Spirit is not His Father.

Begotten in the world of the Virgin Mary without pain of the flesh: because He was conceived without carnal delight.

Whom the Mother hath fed with her milk: her breast full of heaven.

Whom the Angels surrounded as attendants at birth: announcing great joy to the shepherds.

He it is who was adored by the Magi with gifts, who fled from Herod into Egypt, who was baptized by John in the Jordan: was betrayed, seized, scourged, crucified, dead, and buried.

Who rose again with glory: and ascended into Heaven.

Who sent the Holy Spirit upon His disciples: and upon His Mother.

Whom He in the end took up into Heaven: where she sitteth at the right hand of her Son, never ceasing to make intercession for us.

This is the faith of the Virgin Mary: which, unless anyone faithfully and firmly believes, he cannot be saved.

THE VIRTUES OF A RELIGIOUS SUPERIOR

SAINT BONAVENTURE

THE VIRTUES OF A RELIGIOUS SUPERIOR (DE SEX ALIS SERAPHIM)

Instructions by the Seraphic Doctor, ST. BONAVENTURE

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN BY FR. SABINUS MOLLITOR, O.F.M.

B. HERDER BOOK CO. 17 SOUTH BROADWAY, ST. LOUIS, MO. AND 68 GREAT RUSSELL
ST., LONDON, W. C. 1921

NIHIL OBSTAT Sti. Ludovici, die. 15. Sept. 1919, Fr. Martinus Strub, O.F.M., Censor

IMPRIMATUR Sti. Ludovici, die. 15 Sept. 1919, Fr. Samuel Macke, O.F.M., Min. Prov.

NIHIL OBSTAT Sti. Ludovici, die 15. Dec. 1919, F. G. Holweck, Censor Librorum

IMPRIMATUR Sti. Ludovici, die 16. Dec. 1919, XJoannes J. Glennon, Archiepiscopus Sti. Ludovici

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THE VIRTUES OF A RELIGIOUS SUPERIOR

PROLOGUE

“Give an occasion to a wise man, and wisdom shall be added to him.”

As an intelligent man, who frequently becomes wiser through the folly of others, finds even in trifling occurrences matter for increasing his store of knowledge, so newly appointed superiors, who may not be fully prepared for distinguishing between what is right and what is wrong in the discharge of their duties, may find inducements in this treatise to give the matter more earnest reflection and seek from the study of the imperfections here described to acquire a better knowledge of the higher and more useful things as well as of many others necessary to a religious superior in the government of inferiors. For we read that scientists have been led to deduce certain practical principles from the careful study of the habits of certain animals.

CHAPTER I

THE SELECTION OF SUPERIORS

1. “These things I write to thee, ... that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God.” The Apostle wrote two Epistles to his disciple Timothy, whom he had assigned as Bishop to the Church at Ephesus, teaching him how he ought to conduct himself in the office committed to his care, in order that, having learned from him how to lead a holy life, he might also learn through him how to govern others in a useful and meritorious manner. For there is a vast difference between knowing how to be submissive and humble, how to live in peace with others, and how to rule others in a useful manner. “You may notice,” says St. Bernard, “many living peacefully under a director, but if you free them from the yoke, you shall see them unable to be peaceful and helpless against evil. Again you may find some who, as far as they are concerned, live in peace with all and really need no master, yet are by no means fit to direct others. For they are content with a certain good mediocrity, as God ‘has divided the measure of grace’ to them. They know how to live sociably and peacefully among brethren, but when placed over them as superiors, they are not only useless, but imprudent and detrimental. There are others who know how to be superiors.” Hence Moses was instructed not to appoint anyone to govern the people, but “to provide out of all the people” experienced and “able men” to “judge the people at all times.” For one who is entrusted with an office, in order to be of benefit to others, must first learn the discipline of goodness by studiously exercising it himself and by frequent practice to form the habit of it. Hence we read that Our Lord first practised what He later taught by word. “Jesus began to do and to teach.”

2. Those who enter upon the duties of a superior need an instructor, in order that they may learn the things of which they are ignorant, namely,

what is necessary and useful for their own salvation and spiritual advancement. In other words, what they ought to avoid and what they ought to know, to do, to hope, to fear, and to realise as the greater or less good or evil. "You have need to be taught again what are the first elements of the words of God." They should also be trained in the practise of virtue, because it is not sufficient to know what is good, but the good must be actually practised, even as one who has finished a course in medicine, later on applies his science practically. For practice gives to the mind greater skill than mere knowledge of principles. And as those that are still deficient are usually slow in exercising themselves in virtue, it is necessary that they be urged to it occasionally by others. Master's, therefore, are wont to exercise the disciples whom they desire to advance in perfection in diverse virtues,—now in humility, now in fraternal charity, now in self-control, now in devotion, now in patience, chastity, silence, obedience, etc., so that, practiced in this way, these virtues become habits, and the vices opposed to them are eradicated. For the more a virtue increases, the more the vice opposed to it decreases. "Bring them up," says St. Paul, "in the discipline and correction of the Lord."

Those who enter upon the duties of a superior must furthermore be watched, lest they fall into sin or practice virtue with little discretion. For souls that are inexperienced, and not entirely free from inclination to sin, are more frequently restrained from sin through the fear of men than through the fear of God. Hence it is expedient for them to be subject to the direction of superiors, by whom they are withdrawn from danger, as little children in danger of falling into the water, or threatened by wolves, are safeguarded by their mothers. "Counsel shall keep thee and prudence shall preserve thee, that thou mayest be delivered from the evil way and from the man that speaketh perverse things."

They finally need a director to correct them, because evil ways always lead to something worse, just as a fever often is the cause of a more serious ailment, and a wound often produces an ulcer, unless the doctor's care prevents it. Thus also a person that commits a fault is not easily corrected unless he is sustained by the help of one who is stronger than himself. On this account God desires older persons to be superiors of the young, in order that if these fall into sin, or become negligent and imprudent, they may be corrected by admonition, correction, and punishment. For if they were left

to themselves, they would either fail to realise their fault or wallow in the mire and sink deeper into it. Of such St. Jude says: "And some indeed reprove, being judged."

Therefore it is necessary for them to be humbly subject to a master, because a patient cannot be cured of an ailment unless he obeys the directions of his physician. Evil passions are ailments in man. "He gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases."

3. Those, however, who need no master for themselves, ought to be so enlightened in knowledge that they cannot err in those matters which they need to know, and cannot be deceived by men, nor by the evil spirit, nor by their own reason under the appearance of good, but are endowed with the gift of the discernment of spirits. Of them must be true what St. Paul says: "Everywhere and in all things I am instructed."

They must also be filled with the fervor of devotion, so as to know, without the urging of another, how to apply themselves faithfully to the exercise of every virtue in the best manner possible. They should also be able to say: "Forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forth myself to those that are before."

They should, besides, be so filled with the love of goodness that they naturally detest every evil, as it were, diligently avoid scandal, and live peacefully and without offence to anyone, as the Apostle says: "Be without offence to the Jews and to the Gentiles."

They should therefore be so humble in all things that they are neither elated over any good thing that they may possess, nor presume to be entirely free from evil, but accurately discern in themselves all disorders of thought, word, and omission, and correct them by strict self-discipline.

In all these things they are to be so firmly grounded that neither levity, nor distraction, nor difficulty, nor fear shall be able to change their attitude. "Who shall separate us from the charity of Christ?"

But as it is difficult to find such persons, few are fit to live without the yoke of obedience, and those who are placed as superiors over others, to act better and more intelligently, must in turn necessarily be subject to others, up to the Supreme Pontiff, who in turn rules the entire Church Militant as Vicar of Christ.

4. Therefore, those who are obliged to govern others must be endowed with various virtues. Some of these, which involve an irreproachable life,

refer to themselves; others, to their superiors, by means of which they humbly obey those whom they are obliged to obey; others, to subjects, by means of which they govern them meritoriously and advance them in virtue. But though he who has the duty of teaching every virtue by authority of his office, ought to possess all virtues in an eminent degree, still, as six is the first perfect numeral of its kind consisting of several parts, a good director of souls, especially a religious, must be distinguished among the rest by special virtues, as Isaias says: “The Seraphim [who are the most eminent choir of heavenly spirits] had six wings.” It was probably for this reason that the Lord appeared to our holy Father, St. Francis, under the likeness of a Seraph, when He marked him with the stigmata of His Passion, to show that those who would be superiors in his Order must be endowed with spiritual wings. So also, according to St. John in the Apocalypse, “the four living creatures had each of them six wings.”

CHAPTER II

ZEAL FOR JUSTICE

1. The first wing of a director of souls is zeal for justice, by which he cannot bear to see any injustice done to himself or to others without interior protest. Every man is to be considered good in so far as he hates evil. The more a thing is cherished, the more is its destruction regretted. Hence it is to be observed that there are four kinds of persons who are commonly called good in a religious order and in the Church.

2. The first are those who, while they do no wrong, do not diligently exercise themselves in good works, e.g., those who live in peace and tranquillity with others, giving neither offence nor scandal by bad deeds. Of such it is said: "These men were very good to us, and gave us no trouble." We are accustomed to call those good who are gentle in their ways and live sociably with all, even though they appear somewhat sluggish in the practise of virtue. Baptised children are considered good in the same sense.

3. The second kind are better. They do nothing wrong and frequently practise good works,—of self-denial, chastity, humility, charity, assiduous prayer, and similar things which they believe to be good. It is characteristic of this class of persons that, as they neglect naught of the things they understand and are able to do, they are content with whatever good they do, and are not incited to higher things or inspired with a more perfect desire for sanctity. They are satisfied with a certain amount of watching, praying, alms-giving, fasting and similar practices for God's sake, but leave the higher things to others. To them is applicable what Ecclesiastes says: "I have found that nothing is better than for a man to rejoice in his work, and that this is his portion."

4. The third class is even better than the former two. They that belong to it detest and avoid sin, and studiously perform the good that they are able to

do, and when they have done all that they can, they think that they have done very little in comparison with what they would have liked to do, knowing that, as the Apostle says, “bodily exercise is profitable to little.” Consequently they aspire to virtues of the soul, sweetness of internal devotion, an intimate knowledge of God and the sensual perception of His Love, deeming themselves to be and to have nothing, nor receiving any consolation from temporal and spiritual things, as long as they are not enjoying, according to their wish and desire, the pleasure of devotion and that arising from the above-mentioned practice of virtues. They are, however, not kindled with fervent zeal against evil habits and against the danger of others falling into sin. They desire that all men should be good and happy, but when they find the contrary to be the case, they experience no pain but are content with themselves and God. Such persons, if called to rule over others, are less fit for this purpose, because they give more consideration to their own comfort than to the care of their subjects, like the figtree in the parable, which said: “Can I leave my sweetness and my delicious fruits, and go to be promoted among the other trees?”

5. The fourth class are the best. They, like the former, are aflame with zeal for justice, innocence, and virtue, and the salvation of souls. They obtain no consolation from their own advancement unless they can draw others with them to God, after the example of our Lord, who, though He possessed in Himself the fulness of everlasting beatitude, was not content with having glory for Himself, but went out and, by assuming the form of a servant, drew many after Him by deed and word. The zeal of justice, like the “scarlet twice dyed,” glitters with the two-fold color of charity, love of God and of neighbor. Love of God not only inspires a desire to enjoy His sweetness and cling to Him, but delights in doing His holy will, increasing His worship, and exalting His honor, for it desires to see Him acknowledged, loved, served, and glorified above all things by every one. Love of neighbor desires not only the corporal well-being and temporal prosperity of others, but far more their eternal salvation. Wherever, therefore, charity is more perfect, the desire to promote these things is more fervent, the endeavor more energetic, the joy purer, when it sees them accomplished. For charity “seeketh not her own,” but the things that are God’s. In proportion to the ardor with which you love God, and the purity with which you desire the things that are God’s, you grieve over the

offences committed against Him, when you see that He is not acknowledged, but dishonored; when you see that He is not loved and obeyed, that His worship is subverted and His enemies are multiplied and rejoice. And according to the depth of your love for the salvation of your neighbor you will grieve over his ruin and the obstacles laid in his way toward heaven.

6. Though charity is required of all the friends of God, it is required above all of His representatives, who, according to His will, should be governed by love of justice and hatred of iniquity. "Thou hast loved justice," says the Psalmist, "and hated iniquity." By justice is here meant the observance of all those things that are necessary for the salvation or perfection of souls.

7. Some of these things have their foundation in the eternal law, such as the pure virtues: humility, chastity, charity, mercy, and the like, without which no one can be saved. To these the commandments of God in the old and in the new law are mainly directed. For, as our Lord says, upon the law of God and neighbor "dependeth the whole law and the prophets." Others are of human institution, prescribed by an authority that acts in the name of God. Such are the laws that have been laid down by the Church for the general welfare, the rites for the administration of the Sacraments, and other regulations of positive law. "The canons are to be observed by every one," in such a manner that each one shall observe what pertains to his state and what is prescribed for all, laymen as well as clerics.

Others proceed from a vow, as the things which no one is compelled to do, but which a man of his own free will has promised and is obliged to keep as it were by divine command. Such are, for instance, the chastity and obedience of the religious state, the abdication of property in monasteries, and the special obligations imposed by the rule of each order upon its members. "When thou hast made a vow to the Lord, thy God, thou shalt not delay to pay it; because the Lord thy God will require it. And if thou delay, it shall be imputed to thee for a sin. If thou wilt not promise, thou shalt be without sin. But that which is once gone out of thy lips, thou shalt observe and shalt do as thou hast promised to the Lord, thy God, and hast spoken with thy own will and thy own mouth."

Still others proceed from certain practices of spiritual progress, which are not otherwise necessary for salvation, such as the discipline of the Divine

Office, the individual duties in an order, the order of duties, the time of observing silence, the use of food and raiment, the order of time and work, vigils and other spiritual practices, which differ in the various religious orders according to what seems most expedient for each. Though in regard to these things there exists no such strict obligation as if salvation were impossible without them, yet disregard of them mars the beauty of religious life and usually prevents spiritual progress and the edification of others. For just as the love of justice zealously promotes those things in oneself and in others, so on the other hand it grieves and is consumed and incensed when they are disregarded. "Have I not," says the Psalmist, "hated them, O Lord, that hated Thee; and pined away because of Thy enemies."

8. A person imbued with zeal for justice has a certain innate delicacy of feeling, which teaches him to deplore grave transgressions more seriously than minor ones. A thoughtful person considers things as they are, either good or bad, but a fool either regards great things as trifles or trifles as great things, and takes the mote in his brother's eye for a beam, "straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel." "You tithe the mint and rue and every herb and pass over judgment and the charity of God," says Christ. Such persons are carried away by selfishness and are not guided by the Spirit of God, like unto those who punish a person more severely for a neglected inclination in choir than for repeated detractions of another religious, or grow more indignant over the neglect of a versicle or some minute prescription of the rubrics than over a serious quarrel accompanied by scandal.

9. First and above all, therefore, transgressions of the commandments of God must be prevented and deplored; then transgressions of the inviolable precepts of holy Church; after this the non-observance of those things to which a person has bound himself by a voluntary promise, as, for instance, the regular observance of a rule, especially that which is prescribed as a matter of precept; finally, all habits having a species of malice, namely, avarice, pride, envy, gluttony, anger, suspicious familiarity, disobedience, and similar vices, through which the reputation of religious, whereby the rest of the faithful ought to be edified and learn what to avoid and what to do, loses its sweet odor, so that the faithful are scandalised by their vices rather than refreshed by the example of their virtues. St. Paul had such in mind when he said: "The name of God is blasphemed through you among the Gentiles." A serious secret sin is more easily corrected than such an evil

habit, because the former can be cured by secret penance, whereas an evil habit is scarcely ever eradicated from the hearts of those whom it controls.

10. In the fifth place, the zealous practice of prayer must be encouraged. It enlivens the true religious spirit and incites to the practice of every virtue. A religious congregation that is not fed with this oil runs dry. The structure of good works is unstable if it is not sustained by frequent and devout prayer as a stone wall is sustained by cement. In every religious order in which the fervor of devotion has decreased, the structure of the other virtues begins to weaken and is in danger of ruin. "The lamps of the foolish went out."

11. Finally there is to be mentioned the neglect of external discipline, which has been established as an ornament of the religious life and an incentive to spiritual progress. To disregard it is a sign of carelessness and interior levity. Compliance with discipline is not prescribed in such a way that one is not allowed to live differently, but for the reason that it is more conducive to conformity of virtue and uniformity of life, lest any one live and act as he likes and thus prove a cause of disturbance to others. In regard to such customs and practices, which are in themselves indifferent, but prescribed, as has been said, for other reasons, greater care should be given to their being well observed than to scrupulous anxiety lest by some slight indulgence they be neglected, unless, indeed, their habitual disregard would engender a bad habit and dissimulation nourish neglect; in which case, to prevent other evils, the zeal of discipline must not relent.

12. A superior who is imbued with a true zeal for justice, therefore, will first of all take care not to do or teach anything wrong; secondly not to allow or permit himself to be moved by importunity or deception; thirdly, not to favor or prefer to see anything done without being asked, or in his absence; fourthly, never to dissemble or be silent, as if he had no knowledge of things, whereas it is his duty to admonish and teach how bad certain things are, and to deter others from presuming to attempt them in future; fifthly, not to permit faults to go unpunished, because the punishment of a transgression always produces some good, namely, by deterring the one who is guilty from sinning again. "Sin no more," said Christ, "lest some worse thing happen to thee." Furthermore, faults should not be permitted to go unpunished, in order that the erring brother may be cleansed from his sin and not be punished more severely by God later on, for, says Proverbs,

“Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell.” Also for the reason that by this means others may be taught to beware lest they fall into similar faults. “The wicked man being scourged, the fool shall be wiser,” that is to say, the weak and the beginner learn to be cautious. Finally, the Superior, who takes the place of the Supreme Judge, saves his own soul from the sin of neglect by fulfilling his duty. Heli, the high priest, because he failed to do this, heard his own sentence of death and also that of his sons.

13. Dutiful religious differ from careless ones not in this that among the former none is found without sin, but that none is suffered to sin unpunished, and they are studiously protected from the danger of sinning, kept away from the incorrigible, and are cherished and loved, that they may persevere and advance continuously on the way to perfection. Since depravity was found among the choirs of the holy Angels before their confirmation in grace, and among the Apostles under the direction of Christ, what order of virtuous persons on earth may dare to claim for itself that there is no sin in its members? Though many are free from sin by the grace of God, yet not all. “You are clean, but not all.”

14. It is well for the good, while they are still in a position to acquire supernatural merits, to have among them some wicked persons who may be for them the occasion of greater merit. They may have compassion on them in their wickedness. Their zeal may be inflamed. They may exert themselves in correcting the erring. They may be filled with fear of becoming like them. The wicked may become a source of temptations to the good. The good may have to suffer persecution from the wicked. They may be confounded and humbled in considering the evil ways of the bad, because they are not like them, and prompted to render thanks to Him who has protected them from becoming like the wicked. If no opportunity were offered to the good to practice the above mentioned virtues, their merits would by that much be curtailed. “What things a man shall sow,” says St. Paul, “these also shall he reap.”

15. Badly disposed religious, however, are to be neither cherished nor favored, but may be tolerated, especially those whose faults are secret and do not contaminate others, and for whom there is hope of amendment. Where these things are lacking, bad religious cannot be tolerated without serious detriment, and hence should be expelled, in order that their

wickedness may not appear to be agreeable to those who are good. During the time that they are tolerated, they are to be punished with the rod of admonitions, corrections, humiliations, and penances; and soothed with the balm of exhortations, consolations, prayers, and promises, if they recover from their faults and become strong. The way of sin and temptation must be closed to them. This is also beneficial for good religious, lest the occasion of sin corrupt them.

If a superior, who takes the place of God, “whom his Lord setteth over his family,” and to whom for this reason subjects owe the same obedience as to the Lord Himself, fails to correct delinquents, permits the growth of bad habits and the introduction of evil practices, and allows those that have crept in to increase and spread; if he sees that the regular observances are neglected and transgressions multiply, and yet neglects to stop the existing or impending evils to the best of his ability, he shall be responsible to God for three things.

16. First of all he shall have to render an account to God for his negligence in omitting to do that to which his office obliged him. “Because being ministers of his kingdom, you have not judged rightly, nor kept the law of justice, nor walked according to the will of God. Horribly and speedily will he appear to you: for a most severe judgement shall be for them that bear rule.”

Secondly, all the sins of his subjects, which he could and ought to have corrected, are imputed to him. “If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked man from his ways, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I shall require his blood at thy hand.”

In the third place, he shall be responsible for the abuse of the dignity and power that was given to him, having turned it to his own honor and pleasure and not to the purpose for which it was conferred upon him. “Take ye away ... the talent from him ... and the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

17. A superior who is imbued with the right kind of zeal should show how much he loves God by promoting in himself and in others what pleases Him. He should not falter in his zeal through sloth, nor tire in his exertions, nor be deflected by counsels, nor fooled by cunning, nor carried away by friendship and flattery, nor terrified by threats, nor become discouraged on account of long standing abuses, but should fulfill his duty.

CHAPTER III

PITY

1. The second “wing” of the ecclesiastical superior is pity or fraternal compassion. As the love of God inflames him with zeal for justice, so fraternal love should imbue him with affection. For if the rod should be held over evil-doers, the staff is required for the support of the weak. “Thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me.” St. Paul says: “Shall I come to you with a rod; or in charity, and in the spirit of meekness?” Thus also the Samaritan poured into the wounds of the half dead wanderer the wine of fervent zeal and the oil of compassion.

2. There are two kinds of infirmities that need to be treated with compassion,—the one corporal, the other spiritual. Corporal infirmity is threefold. There are first the sick who are forced to remain in bed on account of an acute or serious disease. There are, secondly, those who, though confined to their cells, are able to be up and about now and then and sometimes even venture out, yet are subject to frequent and severe attacks of painful ailments, such as gallstones, ulcers, obesity, and the like. A third kind of sick are those that have no specific ailment, but are weak and exhausted, as, for instance, the aged and those who have been over-worked or are depressed by natural weakness and momentarily worn out by accidental languor.

These classes of patients must be severally treated in a threefold way, namely, with drugs, if it can be properly done, or relaxation of rigor in food, raiment, hours of sleep, etc., exemption from work in the shops, from services, from attending choir and the like, according as their needs may require. Each of these remedies is to be applied to the sick according to their condition, as indicated above, so that they may find relief.

3. Pity and compassion must be shown to the sick and ailing because they are afflicted by the Lord. If they are molested because of their condition their very misfortune will cry out to the Father of mercies against their tormentors. "They have persecuted him whom thou hast smitten; and they have added to the grief of my wounds." For a sick man is harassed in his affliction a great deal more when those who are in duty bound to do so, fail to comfort him, to relieve him from work, to supply his wants, and have no pity for him. "In thy sight," says the Psalmist, "are all they that afflict me; I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort me, and I found none. And they gave me gall [reproach] for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar [censure] to drink. Let their table become as a snare before them, and a recompense and a stumbling block."

4. A good superior realizes that he is the father and not the task-master of his brethren, and acts like a physician, not like a tyrant. He does not consider his subjects as beasts of burden or slaves, but as children, who are destined to partake of the eternal inheritance, and does unto them "as he would have it done unto himself," if he were in a similar position. The strong and healthy do not suffer as a sick person does, and hence have no compassion with the sick. But they will know it later on when they themselves suffer affliction. They object that sick persons often imagine themselves to be weaker than they really are. Are all, then, to be considered hypocrites for this reason? Should they not on the contrary recall that the Lord was willing to spare many wicked men for the sake of a few who were just?

5. The sick stand in greater need of assistance and compassion than the hale and strong, for three reasons. First, on account of the necessity of sustaining life, which they cannot do for themselves. If the necessities of life are not procured for them by others, they become enfeebled and cannot endure. "He that is cast off should not altogether perish." Secondly, on account of the necessity of restoring health and strength, which they have lost by sickness. If even a strong and healthy person needs assistance in order to sustain his health, one who is sick and weak needs a twofold relief in order not to lose the strength he still has, and to recover that which he has lost. For, says the Lord: "From him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away." Thirdly, on account of the relief which consolation

brings. For those who are much afflicted it is a solace to see others having compassion upon them and faithfully assisting them in the endeavor to recover their health. "Blessed be ye of the Lord, for you have pitied my case."

6. But, says some one, those for whom there is hope of recovery are indeed worthy of assistance, but it is a useless waste to assist those who are hopelessly ill. This would be correct if consideration were asked for the sick not for the sake of charity, but for reasons of worldly utility. But he who comes to the relief of an invalid for the sake of receiving a return for the favor, deprives himself of the merit of charity. The greater the misery, the brighter is mercy and the purer is charity. It is, therefore, well for a superior occasionally to suffer himself, so that he may learn to have compassion on his subjects. "We have not a high priest, who cannot have compassion on our infirmities: but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin."

7. Spiritual infirmities are also threefold. The first class of sufferers comprises those who, because of lack of devotion or under the influence of temptations, are prone to commit faults and incur imperfections, are easily led astray by temptations, and apt to fall into sin. "There are many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep."

In the second class are those who, though devout and well disposed, become discouraged by a slight correction or a severe reprimand, or fall a prey to a kind of diffidence akin to despair, or give way to great impatience and excitement, which causes them to grieve afterwards and sometimes to annoy others. Of such St. Paul says: "We that are stronger, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak."

To the third class belong all imperfect religious, who waver in the pursuit of virtue, and, through the impulse of the passions, feel themselves intermittently, even though reluctantly, urged to turn to irritation, anger, sloth, lust, intemperance, and other carnal as well as spiritual vices. They may cry in the words of the Psalmist: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak: heal me, for my bones are troubled."

8. The remedies to be applied to these infirmities are: to remove the occasion of the scandal and the opportunity of sinning, in order that they may not see or hear anything that would cause them to grow infirm, and hence they should not be permitted to roam about outside the house. Dina was ravished when she left her house. Through frequent exhortations they

should be strengthened in the practice of patience, and should be spared severe reproaches and other measures that would tend to excite them until they have recovered from their frailty. St. Paul says: "Fathers, provoke not your children to indignation, lest they be discouraged." He who nags an excited person, so to speak, provokes a barking dog to bite him.—Their idiosyncracies and imperfections should be borne with equanimity. "All things cannot be in men."

9. As doctors, in treating rude and inexperienced persons, are wont to disregard their ignorance, because they are simple, so virtuous persons kindly bear with the faults of others, knowing that all cannot be equally perfect, and hence do not impose upon those who are like tender children in Christ heavier burdens than they are able to carry, or expect of them anything that exceeds their strength. In reference to this the words of Jacob are appropriate: "Thou knowest that I have with me tender children and sheep, and kine with young, which if I cause to be overdriven, in one day all the flock will die." In other words, he who drives those who are like children and have a certain measure of good will, resembling a fruit in the womb, as it were, in an effort to make them practice virtue above their strength, destroys in them what, with the help of grace, they have already acquired. "We became little ones," says St. Paul, "in the midst of you, as if a nurse should cherish her children." He means, I have humored you humbly and gently, out of consideration for your sensitiveness and inexperience. On the other hand, the Lord, through the Prophet Ezechiel, chides harsh and unfeeling shepherds: "The weak you have not strengthened, and that which was sick you have not healed, that which was broken you have not bound up, ... neither have you sought that which was lost; but you have ruled over them with rigor and with a high hand." St. Bernard says: "Learn to be towards your subjects like mothers, and not like masters; strive to be loved rather than feared; and if severity is sometimes necessary, let it be paternal and not tyrannical. Show yourselves as mothers in loving, as fathers in chastising. Be gentle, avoid harshness; hang up the rod, and give the breasts. A mother's breasts should bulge with milk, not swell with fever. Why do you load your subjects down with your burdens when you ought to be bearing theirs?" "Carry them in your bosom," says the Lord to Moses, "as the nurse is wont to carry the little infant, and bear them into the land, for which thou hast sworn to their fathers."

CHAPTER IV

PATIENCE

1. The third wing of the ecclesiastical Seraph is patience and forbearance. As the roof of a house or tent catches the dust, rain, and wind, so that the interior may remain clean and neat, so superiors who faithfully defend their subjects against the tempests of sin must often vicariously bear the brunt of adversities, even as the hen hurls herself against the hawk in defense of her chicks.

2. Now there are three things above all others in regard to which patience seems to be necessary to a superior. First, on account of his manifold duties, cares, and occupations. He has to watch over the spiritual discipline as well as to provide for corporeal needs, as the Apostles were solicitous not only for the spiritual, but also for the temporal necessities of the faithful, especially the poor. “James and Cephas and John,” says St. Paul, “gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship: that we should go into the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision,” i. e., to preach the gospel, “only that we should be mindful of the poor; which same thing also I was careful to do.” Our Lord fed the multitudes whom he had refreshed with the words of salvation, and also with material bread, when they had no food. There are also various occupations, arising out of domestic cares as well as from external causes, in which a superior is occasionally involved and which are apt to fill him with anxiety. Besides these there arise a multitude of labors, such as delivering discourses, holding vigils, attending to business affairs, and other trying duties which require patience. Moses, who was the mildest of men and privileged to hold intimate intercourse with God, divided the burden of governing the chosen people because he was unable to carry so many responsibilities alone. “I alone,” he said, “am not able to bear your business, and the charge of you and your differences. Let us have from

among you wise and understanding men, and such whose conversation is approved among your tribes that I may appoint them your rulers.”

3. In the second place a superior needs patience because of the slow progress of those in whom this virtue is feeble. He sees how few of his subjects advance, how that which, after great exertions and many efforts on his part, had begun to show a little improvement, is easily subverted, and how, on account of the many difficulties and obstacles impeding spiritual progress, his labors seem to be fruitless, just as when one has sown much seed and sees only a few plants growing. Sometimes he observes that what he has personally commanded and ordered, is carried out in a careless manner, and that evil creeps in under the cloak of good, so that he dares not openly to repress it, since it appears good outwardly, and still in the end a greater good is frustrated and the door opened for manifest abuses, as in the case when, to save more souls, more members have been received than can be conveniently kept. This increase of membership will in the end be detrimental to poverty, because some wish to enjoy and not to be deprived of many things, and consequently frequent excursions are made to obtain the things that are necessary, unusual methods are chosen to obtain them, acts against the rule are committed in receiving them, devotion is disturbed, religious customs fall into desuetude, the brethren become accustomed to go out at will and seek various comforts of the body, contract familiarities forbidden by the rule, and ask their penitents for presents, make the edification of souls secondary to other advantages, flatter the rich, increase the order's landed possessions, raise sumptuous palaces, fail to correct scandals, and God's honor, which is to be advanced by the sanctity of our lives and by the edification of others resulting therefrom, is spurned.

The same must be said of the premature promotion of young men and of those who lack experience to the offices of confessors, preachers, and superiors. It also applies to many things which glitter in the eyes of men, but interiorly, in the eyes of God, dim the pure light of religion. Those who are inexperienced in the religious life, and have no taste for spiritual things, are apt to imagine that the whole strength of the spiritual life consists in this external respectability, and therefore defend the latter with great zeal, having no regard for true virtue. A religious superior who sees these and many other disorders, and judges everything in the light of truth, is grieved and troubled, and not daring to correct the abuses as he would desire, is

trained wonderfully in the virtue of patience. “My zeal has made me pine away.” “The zeal of thy house has eaten me up.”

4. In the third place patience is necessary for a superior on account of the ingratitude of those for whom he labors with so much anxiety. He scarcely ever satisfies them, and they generally complain that he could act differently or do better if he wished, so that often he is in doubt whether he ought to make concessions and do what they desire, or stand firmly for what he believes to be more expedient. He may say with St. Paul: “I am straitened between two: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far better.” A superior must also practice patience, when his subjects judge rashly the things that he does and put an evil construction upon them, criticise him, murmur and complain against him, defame him, and take scandal when he thinks he is serving God and them, so that he is scarcely able to escape the difficulties arising from whatever he ordains or undertakes because it displeases them and disturbs others. Patience is still more necessary for a superior when some of his inferiors directly oppose or attack him, or cunningly prevent him from doing his duty.

5. The superior should seek to protect himself against these and other difficulties which beset him, by the triple armor of patience: first let him reply to each one with gentleness, deliberation, and kindness, and repress the inclination to impetuosity, in order that he may not by voice, feature, or conduct, betray impatience. He will achieve more by patience and finally conquer those whom he would provoke still more by impetuosity. Thus Gideon, by his gentle answer to the men of Ephraim, who sought a quarrel with him, appeased their anger. “A mild answer,” says Scripture, “breaketh wrath, but a harsh word stirreth up fury.” Excitement is scarcely ever quelled by excitement, and a vice is not cured by a vice.

Impatience in a superior causes confusion in the attainment of the good which he could promote. It scandalizes others, for as Proverbs says, “he that is impatient, exalteth his folly.” It renders him contemptible in the eyes of his subjects and of others. “He that is vain and foolish, shall be exposed to contempt.” It makes him feared and disliked. “A man full of tongue is terrible in his city, and he that is rash in his word shall be hateful.” It provokes others to impatience. “A passionate man stirreth up strifes; he that is patient appeaseth those that are stirred up.” His subjects dare not inform him of their needs. “If we begin to speak to thee, perhaps thou wilt take it

ill.” It fills the house with murmurings and complaints. “He that troubleth his own house, shall inherit the winds.” It repels timid characters and engenders cowardice. “A spirit that is easily angered, who can bear?” No one dares to correct such a superior in matters that ought to be corrected. “He is a son of Belial, so that no man can speak to him.”

6. A superior shall, in the second place, cultivate calmness. He should neither seek revenge for injuries done to him, nor hate those that have done them, nor be less attentive to their wants, nor seek to have them removed. But he should rather show greater attachment to such persons, so that by this means he may edify them and others by doing good to them and, after the example of the Good Shepherd, exercise himself in virtue. “You shall be the sons of the Highest,” says our Lord, “for he is kind to the ungrateful and to the evil.” Since to instruct in virtue is a duty of the superior, shall he teach his vicious subjects by having them removed? Can the physician effect a cure by shunning his patients? Can a youthful athlete gain renown by refusing to meet his competitors? Can a merchant become rich if he neglects the chances of securing a great profit? This is the reason why so many bishops and prelates have become sanctified above others because they attained the height of perfection through the opportunities which their position offered them, by doing good as well as patiently bearing adversities and edifying others. It is for this reason St. Paul says: “If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.”

7. A superior shall, thirdly, exercise forbearance. Himself willing and eager to do what his office requires of him, he shall bear with the fatigue, the tardiness, and the importunities of his subjects, because thus he will acquire higher merits. “Do you therefore take courage, and let not your hands be weakened; for there shall be a reward for your work.” The “hands” of a superior are eagerness in doing good and patience in bearing burdens. If these are not weakened by idleness or want of forbearance, he will reap an eternal reward.

8. For by these adversities a superior is cleansed from the stain of sin which he contracts through human frailty. “In many things we all offend,” says St. James, and superiors are often guilty of negligence for which they need to be cleansed in this life, in order that they may not be punished in the next. “If he commit any iniquity,” says the Lord, “I will correct him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men.”

9. Weighed down by these faults, a superior is guarded against the evil of pride, which ensnares especially those who have power over others. The sublimity of his position, the freedom from restraint which it confers, and complaisance in good works, easily puff him up, unless the weight of adversity humbles his presumption and thus preserves him from pride. "He openeth the ears of men," says Job, "and teaching, instructeth them in what they are to learn. That he may withdraw a man from the things he is doing, and may deliver him from pride, rescuing his soul from corruption, and his life from passing to the sword. He rebuketh also sorrow in the bed, and he maketh all his bones to wither."

For a good superior the humiliation of adversity is a sure means of salvation and progress, without which success will raise a storm of presumption. David, who was a man according to the heart of God, was most devoted and humble when steeped in adversity, but fell into sin when he became elated with his successes. "It is good for me that thou hast humbled me, that I may learn thy justifications."

10. The merits of a superior, as was indicated above, are increased by the fact that he acquires glory from the good which he promotes in himself and others, and is magnificently rewarded for the hardships which he endures, as the gold that is cleansed by fire becomes purer and more refined. "As gold in the furnace he hath proved them, and as a victim of a holocaust he hath received them." Frequently, however, spiritual perfection increases imperceptibly and is strengthened when seemingly weakened. "So is the kingdom of God," says Jesus, "as if a man should cast seed into the earth, and should sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring, and grow up whilst he knoweth not."

But it would not be surprising if the exertions of a superior did not succeed in all things, since the work of God in men does not always redound to their salvation, and while "many are called, but few are chosen." Not all the seed that is sown grows, and those who dig for treasures willingly throw up tons of earth to find a little gold and silver. The perfection of a good superior is as great as would be the loss were he not a superior, just as light is good in so far as its absence is an evil. A superior ought to be encouraged to bear his burden by the thought that he merits reward no less on account of those who fail or advance but little, than on account of those who make the greatest progress. For the Apostle does not

say that every one shall receive his own reward according to his perfection, but “according to his labor.” It belongs to God “to give the increase.” A teacher labors harder with a fractious than with a docile pupil, and a fair judge will reward him more therefor. A farmer labors harder in a sterile and stony field, and though the harvest be smaller, the reward is greater, because what is obtained with greater difficulty often sells at a higher price.

CHAPTER V

EDIFICATION

1. The fourth wing of a religious superior is an exemplary life or edification. A superior ought to be a model for his subjects and teach by example as well as words, just as one who teaches geometry exhibits his demonstrations by figures, to make himself more easily understood. It is said of Jesus in the Acts of the Apostles that He “began to do and to teach,” and in St. John’s Gospel He says of Himself: “I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also.” Gideon in the Book of Judges says: “What you shall see me do, do you the same.” Although a superior ought to excel his subjects not only in the virtues described, but also in all others, he should particularly set them an example in the following three things: in the community exercises, in gentleness and humility, and in uprightness and sincerity. “In all things,” St. Paul exhorts his disciple Titus, “show thyself an example of good works, in doctrine, in integrity, in gravity.”

2. A superior should conform himself with his subjects in food, dress, and work, and not indulge in banquets and drinking bouts while the others use coarse food and drink. Nor should he dress differently from those with whom he stands on the same footing as regards profession, nor, while arranging or ordering their occupations, dispense himself from working with his subjects. A shepherd who keeps aloof from his sheep exposes them to the wolves. Let him be strong for the strong and weak for the weak, as St. Paul suggests: “To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I became all things to all men that I might save all.” If a healthy superior lives like a weakling, he makes his subjects effeminate by his example; if he is sick and refuses to take medicine, he makes them pusillanimous by insinuating that he either wishes them to do as he does, or does not desire

them to be cured. A soldier fights more cheerfully when he sees his general sharing the hardships of the campaign. "All the time that the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, until the day wherein He was taken up from us," that is to say, from the time He began to have disciples until He ascended up to His Father, He always taught by His example, coming in, living on familiar terms with His disciples, and going out, by associating with the multitude, as was proper.

3. The superior should also be humble in his bearing, show by his conduct that he has no high opinion of himself, and does not affect the superiority, but is fearful and would rather prefer the condition of a subject, convinced that those over whom he is placed are better than he and deeming himself more worthy to be their servant than their master. Thus he shall live up to the admonition of our Lord: "He that is greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is the leader, as he that serveth. But I am in the midst of you as he that serveth." "Have they made thee ruler? be not lifted up; be among them as one of them."

4. A superior should, furthermore, be affable, so that his subjects have easy access to him and can speak with him with confidence of their needs. He should listen to them patiently, kindly give them satisfaction, earnestly instruct and cheerfully exhort them. He should seek to be loved rather than feared, for men more willingly obey one who is loved than one who is feared. Loving obedience is in the proper sense voluntary, whereas obedience based upon fear is forced. But the more voluntary obedience is, the sublimer its merits. The purpose of the superior's office is to guide those committed to his care to eternal life and faithfully to lead them to merits of virtue.

5. A superior should be modest in the use of temporal things. He should neither practise nor love ostentation, but whatever he has should show forth voluntary poverty and humility, as, for instance, his garments, books, cell, bed, utensils, table, and similar things, so that nothing may have the appearance of vanity and singularity; nor shall he tolerate them in the rest. Like attracts like; a proud heart loves novel, an humble heart lowly, things. The sign of an humble heart is to seek neither dainty, nor love precious, nor desire costly things. Job says: "He beholdeth every high thing, he is king over all the children of pride."

6. Honesty and sincerity shows itself in three ways. First of all a superior should not be frivolous, or use vulgar and irreligious language, which, though it may occasionally be considered amusing, savors of disrespect. "If a preacher is frivolous in his ways," says Saint Gregory, "his preaching will repel others." Though a superior is rather to be loved, yet by the insolent he ought to be feared. Love itself is sweeter, as it were, when mixed with respect. This is evident in our Creator, the sweetness of whose dignity is felt more deliciously the more exalted His Majesty is found to be. Hence the Psalmist says: "The Lord is sweet and righteous; therefore, He will give a law to sinners in the way."

7. A good superior should not bestow his affections lightly on women or persons conspicuous for levity. For, although the more virtuous are to be treated with greater affection than those who are less virtuous, and all with consideration for the sake of the hope of eternal salvation in Christ, still in his external bearing the superior should act towards everyone so that he may not be suspected of despising one for the sake of others, but that each may think himself loved by him and confide in him as in a true friend. Thus he shall avoid the evil appearance of entertaining displeasure towards some and malice towards others, as it was with the brothers of Joseph, who hated him because he was a favorite of their father.

8. A good superior should not be fickle in his counsels, so that what pleases him today displeases him tomorrow, wishing now this and now that, though there is no reason for the change. Who shall trust his judgment or conform to his will when he is shaky in either? His subjects can neither respect his prudence nor know how to render obedience to him. In either case great harm is apt to follow. He should bear in mind the words of St. Paul: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good," and, "Do ye all things without murmurings and hesitations." But where there is good reason for acting differently in different circumstances, such as real necessity or religious utility, he is not frivolous but correct and sincere in his conduct, for, as it is folly to exchange the better for the worse, so is it foolish to cling obstinately to one's ideas and not know when to sacrifice them for a greater and more evident good. "Neither must you think," said the great king Artaxerxes, "if we command different things, that it cometh of levity of mind, but that we give sentence according to the quality and necessity of the times, as the profit of the commonwealth requireth." The Apostle,

excusing himself for having promised the Corinthians a visit, says that he had not given this promise thoughtlessly but for their own benefit: "I have had a mind to come to you before, that you might have a second grace." In Ecclesiasticus it is said: "As a judge of the people is himself, so also are his ministers: And what manner of men the ruler of a city is, such also are they that dwell therein."

9. Good teachers usually have good scholars. In religious orders, and in the Church generally, many would become better if examples of virtuous life were given them by their instructors. Culpable negligence in this matter shall be severely punished, for God says through the prophet Ezechiel: "Behold, I myself came upon the shepherds; I will require my flock at their hands." Teaching without example is like mortar without lime, dry and useless. "Thus saith the Lord God: I will break down the wall that you have daubed with untempered mortar." Correct copies are made of correct, corrupt copies of corrupt books. Teaching by example makes a deeper impression than by words. "For the preaching of the one whose behavior is contemptuous, is worthless." A superior ought to strive above all to make his subjects Christ like, that is to say, imprint in them the form of the life and teaching of Christ, so that they may not only listen to him, but also imitate his virtues. Then he may say with St. Paul: "Be ye followers of God, as most dear children," and "My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you." But as verbal instruction fails to enforce the teachings of Christ, superiors should exhibit its visible form in their lives, so that it become more deeply impressed upon their inferiors. Then they may say with the Apostle: "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ's"; in other words, if you desire a model of a Christ like life, behold it in my conduct, for, he says: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." The representative of Christ ought to take His place in promoting His love, in strengthening His authority, and in reflecting His likeness. He should promote in his subjects what Christ desires, and by his authority accomplish what is expedient for them and exhibit in his life and conduct what is possible for them to imitate. "For," says St. Paul, "we preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ, our Lord; and ourselves, your servants through Jesus." He preaches himself and not Christ, who in his utterances seeks his own glory and by a bad example sets up himself rather than Christ as an example for imitation, as the same Apostle declares: "They are zealous in

your regard not well: but they would exclude you, that you might be zealous for them.” In other words, those who by their bad example keep you from imitating Christ, so that you learn to imitate their ways and follow their example, are not imbued with the right zeal, even though they be your superiors.

CHAPTER VI

PRUDENT DISCRETION

1. The sixth wing of the ecclesiastical Seraph is prudent discretion and thoughtful consideration of the things to be undertaken. How necessary these qualities are for the one who is to be superior over religious, Solomon shows. Being free to ask a favor from God, he set everything else aside and asked for wisdom, without which he declared himself unable to rule his people wisely. “Give therefore,” he prayed, “to thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy people, and discern between good and evil.” “To you, therefore, O kings, are these my words, that you may learn wisdom, and not fall from it.” “And now, O ye kings, understand: receive instruction, you that judge the earth.” A superior is a guide for the flock committed to his care, and if he errs, the flock is confused and led astray. As the eye is the light of the body, so the shepherd is the light of the flock entrusted to him. “You are the light of the world, ... so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works.” As the eye is either keen or dim, so the body is guided by it either in the right or in the wrong direction.

2. A twofold prudence is necessary for a superior. He should know what is to be done and how it is to be done. For a good act is not good of itself unless it is done well, that is to say, done as it ought to be done. “Cast discretion to the winds,” says St. Bernard, “and virtue becomes a vice.” Without it zeal becomes rashness. “They have a zeal of God,” says St. Paul, “but not according to knowledge.” Without prudence compassion lapses into trivial sentimentality under the guise of affection. “He that spareth the rod,” declares the Wise Man, “hateth his son,” that is to say, he who under the guise of affection fails to correct the erring, ruins his soul. Patience without prudence arouses contempt against authority, since such a superior

under the cloak of humility fails to repress the disobedient. “Roboam was inexperienced and of a fearful heart, and could not resist them,” namely, those who set themselves against him and the Lord. Finally, without prudence good example is worthless for the edification of others, as good food without salt is not relished. For this reason the Lord prescribed offerings of salt with the oblations, and in Genesis He says: “If thou do well, shalt thou not receive? If ill, shall not sin forthwith be present at thy door?” In other words, it is not enough to do a good thing, but one must also consider how, when, where, and why to act.

3. There are many things concerning which a superior ought to exercise prudence,—so many that they cannot be touched upon in a brief treatise like this. But there seem to be principally four, about which he ought to exercise thoughtful consideration. In the Book of Exodus the high priest is directed, when entering the holy of holies, to carry upon his breast among other ornaments “the rational of Justice,” “and set in it four rows of stones.” Like the high priest entering the holy of holies to serve the Lord, a superior assumes the care of souls to render to God a most acceptable service by attending to their salvation; for there is no offering more acceptable to God than zeal for souls. A superior must, therefore, among other qualifications, bear upon his breast, as it were, four qualities. The first of these is ability to govern those committed to his care, so that his good subjects advance and persevere. The second, ability to correct and amend those that have erred and sinned. The third, ability to dispose of the business matters requiring his attention. The fourth, ability to guard and conduct himself prudently in all these things. The three precious stones are the three qualities pertaining to these four qualifications.

4. To know distinctly the character, conscience and abilities of his subjects, so that the duties of regular observance are assigned to each according to the best interests of all, is a prime requirement in a superior. All cannot do everything in the same manner, but, as St. Paul says: “Everyone hath his proper gift from God; one after this manner, and another after that.” God prescribed: “Aaron and his sons shall go in, and they shall appoint every man his work, and shall divide the burdens that every man is to carry.” Aaron and his sons represent the major and minor superiors, who ought to enter into, and impose upon each the duties of the regular observance according to custom. As there are three grades of this

observance, they form three jewels in the first field of the four forms described above.

5. The first matter for a superior to attend to consists in that which, according to the form of each one's profession, is necessary for salvation. This is so intimately connected with the order and the rule that heedless transgression of it is a grievous sin. Such is obedience, voluntary poverty, chastity, and whatever is commanded under the binding power of obedience. In regard to these matters a superior has no power to dispense, since even he is bound to keep them. It is a superior's duty to watch carefully over these matters, because he is bound to watch zealously over their observance, to urge those who are refractory to observe them, and for no reason whatever to allow, as far as he is concerned, any one to act contrary to them, even though this would cause great hardship or loss to him or his brethren. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ," says St. Paul, "shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?" He meant to say: none of these. This is a I reply to those who say: if the needs of the brethren are not supplied in one way or another; they cannot live. Since such a form of collecting is opposed to the Rule, a scandal and disgrace to the religious life, it is better for religious not to remain in a place where they cannot or will not live as such; for then they shall neither perish themselves nor shall others be scandalized by them. "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." What shall be said of those who scandalize many? This reflection ought to be the first stone shining on the breast of the religious superior, and is to be guarded above all.

6. The second point pertains to those things that refer to the practice of higher perfection, namely, extraordinary patience, exalted humility, heroic charity, strict temperance, rare poverty, sublime devotion, and similar virtues. To these the superior ought to lead those committed to his care by exhortations, admonitions, and attractive example, rather than by compulsion, when they are tardy or remiss. For the counsels of perfection are recommended, not commanded, with the exception of those that fall within the limits of the vow, as, for example, continence. The principal reason for the institution of monastic life, however, was that it might be a

wrestling school for exercising in perfection. In the palaestra the wrestlers were stripped to the buff and rubbed with oil, so that they could not be gripped by their opponents. This is an apt figure of the struggle going on in the religious life. "Every one that striveth for the mastery," says St. Paul, "refraineth himself from all things." A superior, therefore, should also carry this gem upon his breast when teaching and urging his followers not only to walk on the path that leads to salvation, but also to strive after the perfection that will secure for them great glory in heaven.

7. The third object of a superior's care and attention are those things which are neither purely necessary for salvation nor form the subject of higher perfection, but which are nevertheless appropriately assigned by the Holy Fathers for the acquisition and preservation of both as exercises of good works, as ornaments of a religious life, and as means of edifying those that observe them. Such are: fasting, silence, the solemn celebration of the divine office, and corporal exercises. These, according to the Apostle, are as useful as instruments to artists, though they can be performed without tools, as it were, by experts, because the arts existed long before such special tools. Hence a prudent superior, if necessity or utility demand, will dispense in such things without difficulty according to the requirements of time and place, when he sees that it is expedient to do so. Where, however, neither necessity nor utility justifies a dispensation, he will seek to have these things performed. To know how to observe the golden mean between rigor and laxity requires considerable discretion in a superior. If he were too rigorous, he would make himself disagreeable to his brethren and they would be less disposed to practice those virtues which are more useful and necessary; whereas, if he were more indulgent than he ought to be, relaxation of discipline would quickly follow. "He that contemneth small things, shall fall little by little."

8. A superior must also exercise prudence in correcting sinners. This is the second row of precious stones and contains three jewels. For there are three forms of discretion, as there are three kinds of delinquents. Some delinquents, after a fall, soon apply the remedy of penance, urged thereto either by the interior voice of conscience or by external correction on the part of others. The spiritual physician ought to apply the remedy of penance with the balm of compassion tempered in such a manner that sinners may render satisfaction to God for their offences and repair the scandal they

have given, so that others may be filled still more with the fear of sin, while the penitents themselves, finding it such an easy remedy, do not regret that they have submitted to the penance imposed. St. Paul says: "If a man be overtaken in any fault, you, who are spiritual [physicians] instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted;" in other words, impose such a penance upon the sinner that he may realize the gravity of his fault, yet treat him with the clemency with which you would desire to be treated by others were you to fall into a similar sin. Such discretion is one of the jewels of the second order.

9. Others, when they have sinned, conceal, excuse, and defend their fault. The venom of sin festers in their conscience, and although the superior may judge from certain symptoms that putrid poison has collected there, still it does not break forth, either by evident facts or voluntary confession, so that it could be lanced at the proper moment with the scalpel of public correction. If he reproveth the delinquent, nothing is gained, and he seems rather to excite his evil passions than to correct the erring brother. If he falters and dissembles, he is tormented and filled with anxiety for the soul of the brother as well as for his own, because he fails to correct a delinquent. Since he cannot, therefore, fitly do anything else in the circumstances, he ought to keep his own counsel and practice patience. What he cannot do by persuasion, he should seek to accomplish by prayer, in order that God may soon convert the erring subject or bring to light his hidden malice for the purpose of applying a suitable remedy. Thus for some time Our Lord silently tolerated His betrayer, Judas, for He omitted to reprove him publicly until his wickedness grew so enormous that it came to light by itself. Although, while it remained a secret, he—Judas—was afflicted with a deadly malady of the soul, still his evil condition injured no one, and hence he could without any blame to Jesus be tolerated in silence. "Suffer both," namely, "the cockle and the wheat, to grow until the harvest," says Our Lord in reference to such a condition, and the Apocalypse says: "He that is filthy, let him be more filthy still." But such persons ought, when possible, to be prudently deterred from the occasion of sin, and in common with others admonished to reform. This Our Lord did for Judas when He said: "Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man shall be betrayed." Since Judas, however, could not have fallen into such a dreadful sin unless he had gradually and repeatedly hardened his heart in

crime, it is evident that he was secretly tolerated for some time in his evil state by Our Lord, who may have said: "I am silent, and as one that seeth not." Such dissembling in the heart of a superior requires a high degree of prudence in order not to deflect him from the path of justice. This is the second gem in the second row of jewels that should shine upon the breast of a superior.

10. The third kind of delinquent religious are guilty of grievous and public faults and receive no proper correction, or receive it perversely, because they do not mend their conduct and others are led into evil through them, or scandalized by them, or begin to imitate them, when they see that they sin without being punished, desiring to be spared themselves as the others are spared. Wherever these four conditions concur,—namely, grievous and public transgression, no hope of correction on account of obstinacy or an inveterate habit of sin, infection of others by bad example, or scandal by toleration,—nothing remains to be done but to cast away the rotten egg and cut off the putrid member, lest sound organs become infected and corrupted. This the Holy Ghost enjoins in the following passage: "I would they were even cut off, who trouble you." "Put away the evil one from among you." "If the unbeliever depart, let him depart." "Cut it the unfruitful fig-tree] down therefore: why cumbereth it the ground?" "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down." "Command the children of Israel, that they cast out of the camp every leper, and whosoever hath an issue of seed, or is defiled by the dead, ... lest they defile it." Superiors should not, however, be impelled to take such measures by mere impulse, but seek the mature advice of prudent persons imbued with the spirit of God and the gift of counsel. The Holy Ghost says: "Do nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done." And Christ declares: "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." In other words, the one who, in the habit of a religious, by his conduct scandalizes rather than edifies the simple-minded, deserves to be sentenced to expulsion, lest his evil example contaminate the community.

11. The third sphere in which prudence and discretion are to be exercised, are the business affairs that a superior has to attend to. Some of these he must delegate to others, some he must attend to himself, others he must put

away as far as possible. Thus Christ left some things to His disciples, as, for instance, money matters to Judas, and retained for Himself the office of preaching and curing the sick. When requested to settle a dispute about an inheritance among brothers, He answered: "Who hath made me judge, or divider, over you?"

12. If he desires to attend personally to the external and temporal needs of the body, a superior is prevented from attending to the interior and better things, for when the mind is diverted to external affairs, it is apt to neglect the interior and urgent needs of the soul. The Lord enjoined upon Moses: "Be thou to the people in those things that pertain to the Lord, ... that so it may be lighter for thee, the burden being shared out unto others." A similar injunction is indicated in the Acts: "It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables." If a superior has no one to whom he can commit the care for externals, it would be better to suffer losses than that he himself should be occupied with temporal affairs. Christ, who knew Judas to be a thief, nevertheless permitted him to attend to business affairs. "He was a thief, and having the purse, carried the things that were put therein." The example of Our Lord contradicts those who easily find others to whom they care commit the care of souls in order to attend to business affairs themselves, though it is an incomparably greater injustice to imperil immortal souls than to suffer the loss of earthly things.

13. A director of souls and superior ought to reserve for himself the care of spiritual things and whatever is necessary for salvation and progress in virtue, as these matters pertain to the very substance of his official position and he shall have to render an account of them above all others before the judgment seat of God. They are the following: the manner in which the rule and other regulations and the discipline of the order are kept; peace and charity among the brethren; knowledge of the character of each and solution of their difficulties; foresight and prevention of the danger of sinning; admonition of their subjects to advance in virtue; correction of what should be corrected, solving doubts, instructing all how to attend to the obligations assigned to them in a proper manner, so that they may please their brethren as much as possible and not act contrary to the dictates of conscience. When, however, it is impossible to satisfy others without offending God, God must be obeyed and patience practiced, for "we ought to obey God, rather than men." The religious superior is the head of the body of the

brotherhood. While the other members are employed in the duties assigned to each, the head, who is placed over all, shall provide for all as the center of all the senses ruling the whole body and transmitting to all the individual impulses of the senses as well as the emotions through commands or concessions of holy obedience, as the nerve centers do in the body. For the head is not employed in a single form of action, in order that it may devote itself to provide for all the members; it serves all; it sees, hears, tastes, and speaks for all. A superior's position is similar in regard to his subjects. St. Paul says: "They [the superiors] watch as being to render an account of your souls."

14. Superfluous matters and such as are not necessary for the salvation or spiritual advancement of souls, a superior should endeavor to avoid and keep away from himself and his brethren as much as possible. For since on account of lack of time and "the evil of the day" it is almost impossible to attend to necessary matters, we cannot look after superfluous or other people's affairs without neglecting what is better and more necessary. A mind distracted with many cares is less able to attend to its duties properly. When superiors and religious immerse themselves too deeply in external occupations, such as building, writing books, law-suits, etc., which they had better omit, it sometimes happens that they not only neglect the better things, but also burden their conscience with sin. Business cares dull the mental vision for spiritual and internal things and quench the ardor of the soul for heaven. As pus gathers where there is a wound, which, unless it is removed, causes a sore or ulcer, so business cares may multiply so as to extinguish the spirit that should dominate them. A prudent superior should foresee the consequences of every act and carefully consider what ought to be permitted and what is expedient. Ecclesiasticus utters this warning: "My son, meddle not with many matters." It is foolish for one who carries a heavy burden to add to it unnecessarily.

15. Above all, a superior should exercise discretion concerning himself, lest, while providing for others, he neglect himself, and in saving others, imperil his own salvation. There should always be present to him the words: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffereth the loss of his own soul?" This is the fourth row of gems, containing a threefold discretion as three precious stones. St. John says in his second Epistle:

“Look to yourselves, that you lose not the things which you have wrought (in others) but that you may receive a full reward.”

16. A superior's first care should be a serene conscience. His conscience, that is, should always be sound and pure. It is sound when he desires, undertakes, commands or permits nothing that is forbidden, improper, or contrary to his holy profession, or in which there is sin or scandal. It is pure when he seeks not the approval of others for the good that he accomplishes or promotes, nor is pleased with himself in a disorderly manner on account of it, but seeks in all things to please God alone, so that what he does in His stead, i. e., as His representative, he does for His sake or out of love for Him. “If thy eye be single,” says Jesus, “thy whole body shall be lightsome;” that is, if the intention is pure through charity, the entire body of good works performed will be worthy of eternal reward. “But if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome.” Let the superior, therefore, examine his conscience and carefully consider what he has done, what he has omitted that ought to have been done, and from what motives he has acted. He should grieve over his faults, confess, correct, and avoid them; but regarding the good he has done, he should glory not in himself, but “in the Lord.” St. Paul says: “If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.” He who brushes the dust from another can scarcely avoid being soiled himself, so that he must also dust himself. “Physician, heal thyself.” A superior may, of course, rejoice over the good he has done, but he must not exalt himself, considering that God gave him the grace to think, speak, and act not for himself alone, but for those over whom he has been placed.

17. He should also watch over his conduct and utterances, by which he is in duty bound to benefit others rather than himself. He who is compelled to live as an example to others, and to satisfy all, needs great discretion to stick to the golden mean, lest he be either too sad or too merry, too severe or too lenient, too jolly or too stern, too harsh or too mild, too strict or too lax, too often with guests or too seldom, too choice or too sparse in reflection, too observant or too careless in regard to the doings of the brethren, too familiar with some and too neglectful of others. He cannot always please everybody, but he will err less by permitting kindness to influence his conduct, which renders him more amiable to his subjects and induces them to obey him more willingly, have recourse to him with greater confidence in their troubles, and imitate his example more zealously. His

power and authority causes his subjects to fear him sufficiently; if to it he adds austere severity, he burdens the minds of his subjects. “You ruled over them with rigor, and with a high hand and my sheep were scattered.” “Be not as a lion in thy house, terrifying them of thy household.” This is the reason why Our Lord Jesus, the Supreme Pastor, has given us such a noble example of kindness and charity and made Himself so loveable and so easily imitable that through the love of His humanity He draws us to the love and knowledge of His Divinity. “While we visibly recognize God, we are drawn by Him to the love of invisible things.” He who takes the place of Christ should strive above all to make himself beloved by his subjects, so that he may the more easily draw them to the love of Christ. In doubtful matters he should always incline to what, according to his best judgment, is more in conformity with charity, humility, purity, and evangelical perfection.

18. This quality of discretion, which determines all other things, should also lead the superior to give due attention to himself, in order that his discretion may not be like the eye of the body, which, though it sees other things, does not see itself; in other words, “not to be more wise than it behooveth to be wise.” A superior should not trust himself more than is expedient, nor be wise in his own eyes, because, according to St. Gregory, “as subjects are tempted to criticise superiors because they do not act right in many things, so superiors are tempted to consider themselves wiser than the rest.” The Book of Proverbs says: “Hast thou seen a man wise in his own conceits? There shall be more hope of a fool than of him.” For the fool, lacking confidence in himself, seeks advice from the wise man, in order to avoid mistakes; but he who presumes more than he ought upon his own judgment, even in erring, very often imagines himself to be right. The most dangerous temptation for every Christian soul seems to be to trust too much to one’s own judgment. No one is so keen as not to err in some things, and hence he who imagines that he is always entirely right, deliberately opens the door for the tempter, who enters with various temptations under the semblance of good. “He sitteth in ambush,” says the Psalmist, “with the rich in private places, that they may kill the innocent.” The evil spirit lays more snares when he knows a greater measure of success is obtainable. So he seeks the destruction of “the innocent” when the latter expects to serve God

more than him. Hence it is always a matter of prudence for a superior to listen cheerfully to advice and to seek it humbly.

19. There is a threefold advantage in doing this. First, the superior is more certain of not becoming the victim of deception, when others think just as he does. Secondly, if a mistake occurs after he has acted upon the advice of others, it cannot be imputed to him in the same degree as if he had acted solely on his own judgment. Thirdly, to those who observe this rule God, as a reward of humility, often gives the grace of learning, either through themselves or through others, what they did not know before. For this reason Moses, to whom God spoke face to face, gladly took and followed the advice of his father-in-law, Jethro. The Holy Ghost by His inspiration induced St. Paul to go to Jerusalem and consult with his fellow apostles, Peter, John, and James, about the Gospel which he had learned through revelation from Jesus Christ, in order that he might be more certain in his preaching and not disagree with them, thus giving the faithful an example of seeking advice from their superiors. "My son," says Sirach, "do thou nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done." Some, as soon as they are raised to the position of superior, consider themselves so filled with the spirit of wisdom that they regard everything their predecessors have done as wrong and foolish. Others, when relieved of office, condemn whatever their successors do, blind to the fact that, as they disparage the acts of others, so others underrate theirs. "Woe to thee," exclaims Isaias, "that despisest, shalt not thyself also be despised?" For nobody's acts are, as a rule, so minutely and industriously criticised by others as the acts of those who themselves severely criticise others, when they are accidentally found reprehensible in matters about which they censure others.

20. There are two kinds of persons whose advice a prudent superior should not easily accept, namely, flatterers and detractors. The former induce him to trust in himself more than is right. "They that call thee blessed, the same deceive thee, and destroy the way of thy steps," lest you think yourself right in humility of self-knowledge. Detractors induce a superior to suspect others and to have a less worthy opinion of them than he may have had, and to misjudge the innocent even before he has full knowledge of the truth. Of such the Book of Esther says: "With crafty fraud they deceive the ears of princes that are well meaning and judge of others

by their own nature.... The good designs of kings are depraved by the evil suggestions of certain men, ... who endeavor to undermine by lies such as observe diligently the offices committed to them, and do all things in such manner as to be worthy of all men's praise." Advice is usually sought for three reasons, namely, for the sake of enlightenment, to clear up doubtful matters; for the sake of authority, to give it greater force because the question was discussed with certain persons; and for the sake of peace, that no one may have reason for complaint. The first renders superiors more prudent; the second, more worthy of advancement; the third, serviceable to all. But because there are countless individual cases in which prudence is necessary, no definite rule applicable to all can be given.

CHAPTER VII

DEVOTION

1. The sixth and last wing of the ecclesiastical Seraph, without which the others can accomplish nothing, and which is, therefore, the most necessary of all, is piety or devotion to God. It incites zeal for justice, infuses loving compassion, strengthens patience, sets up an edifying example, and enlightens discretion. This is the “unction of the Spirit,” teaching all things beneficial for salvation, as St. John says: “Let the unction which you have received from him, abide in you. And you have no need that any man teach you; but as his unction teacheth you of all things.”

2. Piety enlightens the mind to know what is best. “He [the Holy Ghost] will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind.” It inflames the soul with a desire for what is good. “They that eat me, shall yet hunger; and they that drink me, shall yet thirst.” It infuses strength for attaining perfection. “It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish.” It engenders horror of sin. “I have hated and abhorred iniquity.” It leads to the practice of virtue. “He brought me into the cellar of wine, he set in order charity in me.” It regulates external conduct and expression. “Never have I joined myself with them that play; neither have I made myself partaker of them that walk in lightness.” It renders knowledge of faith sweet. “For the wisdom of doctrine is according to her name,” namely, delicious knowledge. It raises hope to confidence. “For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are sons of God.” It kindles the love of God. “The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us.” It places us on familiar terms with God. “The Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man is wont to speak to his friend.” It instills confidence towards God. “We have confidence towards God. And whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of him.” It enriches our prayers.

“May thy whole burnt-offering be made fat,” and, “Make a fat offering.” It produces devotion and fervor. “Sweet, beneficent, and gentle is the spirit of wisdom.” It nourishes humility. “To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little.” It extracts the oil of the spirit as in a hot cauldron. It bestows constancy in adversity. “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?” St. Paul in his devotion says: “Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ?” It makes all good works delightful. “Her conversation has no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness.” It raises the mind to heaven. “If he turns his heart to him, he shall draw his spirit and breath unto himself.” It engenders disgust for the world. “I have seen all things that are done under the sun, and behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit.” It arouses a desire for heavenly things. “I am straitened between two: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.” It wipes out sin and the punishment of sin. “Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much.” It increases supernatural merit. “If riches be desired in life, what is richer than wisdom, which maketh all things.” It greatly edifies our neighbor. “Offer sacrifice to God, incense and a good savour for a memorial.” “We are a good odour of Christ.” It drives away devils. “The smoke thereof driveth away all kinds of devils.” It invites the Angels and Saints. “Princes went before joined with singers.” “When thou didst pray with tears, ... I offered thy prayer to the Lord.”

3. These and many other blessings are conferred by the grace of piety or devotion. Hence a superior who has to guide souls ought to make every effort to possess it, for by means of it he is always informed of what should be done, assisted in doing it, and safeguarded against neglect. He should not only pray for himself, but also for those that have been entrusted to his care and for those whom he is not able to preserve from evil without the help of God. “Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” The superior should be a mediator between God and his subjects, in order that, solicitous for the interests of God among them, while instructing, correcting, and guiding them on the way to higher things, he may also faithfully promote their interests before God by conciliating Him, imploring His grace, and preserving the brethren from evil. Then he may say with Moses: “I was the mediator and stood between the Lord and you.”

4. Devotion may be general, or special, or continuous. It is general in divine office; special, in prayers; continuous, in the performance of all

duties. In regard to the divine office, a superior must possess a threefold zeal; namely, to see that everything is done in an orderly manner and without mistakes. “Let all things be done decently, and according to order.” “David and the chief officers of the army separated for the ministry the sons of Asaph, of Ham and Idithun; to prophesy with harps, and with psalteries, and with cymbals according to their number serving in their appointed office.” He should also see to it that the work of the Lord, namely, the divine Office, is performed assiduously. “Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully.” He should see to its devout, reverent, distinct, and attentive recitation, guarding against interruptions and disturbances, remembering that it is said: “With the whole ‘heart and mouth praise ye Him and bless the name of the Lord.”

5. The Holy Ghost has commanded the recitation of the divine Office in the Church for five reasons. The first is to imitate the heavenly choirs. The Saints and Angels are unceasingly engaged in the presence of God in Singing His praises. “Blessed are they,” says the Psalmist, “that dwell in thy house, O Lord, they shall praise thee for ever and ever.” Christ, according to His promise, “Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world,” deigns to be truly with us here sacramentally as well as spiritually, and hence it behooves us to the best of our ability to render Him honor and praise according to the example of the celestial Spirits, so that even though we do not praise Him continuously, as those heavenly chanters do, we sing at least from time to time His praises in spite of our frailty, imitating “that Jerusalem, which is above, ... which is our mother.”

6. The divine Office has been established, secondly, that we should render thanks to God at certain hours, mindful of His blessings, and praying for His grace from time to time turn to Him, who was born of the Virgin Mary at night, dragged before the council at early morn, arose at daylight, was scourged at the third hour, and a little later sent the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, was crucified at the sixth hour, died upon the cross at the ninth, and being at supper in the afternoon gave us the Sacraments, and was buried at Compline. The celebration of Holy Mass, however, not only reminds us of the mystery of His Passion, but also exhibits the grace of His Real Presence, and under the form of the Blessed Sacrament nourishes us in a spiritual manner with His Flesh and Blood. As it is right and proper, therefore, never to forget these things, so it is also proper always to recall

them at stated hours. “I will remember,” says the Prophet, “the tender mercies of the Lord, the praise of the Lord for all the things that the Lord hath bestowed on us.”

7. In the third place the divine Office was established, in order that through it we may be continuously incited to devotion and kindled with the love of God, lest through indolence and the multitude of our occupations our love grow lukewarm. In the Book of Leviticus the Lord says: “This is the perpetual fire which shall never go out on the altar.... The priest shall feed it, putting wood on it every day in the morning.” This fire is the fervor of devotion, which ought always to burn on the altar of our heart, which the devout priest ought to nourish constantly by putting on it the fuel of divine praises, that it may never be extinguished. “I will bless the Lord at all times, His praises shall be always in my mouth.”

8. The fourth reason for which the divine Office was instituted is that we may through it draw the faithful, who know how to set aside certain hours for prayer, to the practice of devotion, so that they may assemble in church at least when the offices of divine praise are performed therein, and be less easily distracted when they see the clerics celebrating the divine Office. “All the multitude of the people,” says St. Luke, “was praying without, at the hour of incense.” Most people would scarcely ever devote themselves to prayer if they were not called to church from worldly occupations at stated times to engage in divine service and listen to the word of God.

9. The fifth purpose of the divine Office is to exhibit the beauty of the Christian religion. Jews, Gentiles, and heretics from time to time assemble in their churches to celebrate their false rites. It is evidently far more proper and fitting for those who have the true and holy mysteries of the Sacraments to assemble often for the purpose of celebrating and venerating them and performing the solemn service of praise due to the Creator. For by this means they make themselves worthy of more grace, and of eternal life, and the laity are led to love and revere their holy religion. “To the festivals he added beauty, and set in order the solemn times, ... that they should praise the holy name of the Lord.”

Hence among all the external observances of religion the greatest attention ought to be given to the divine Office, so that, as has been said, it may be performed in an orderly, earnest and devout manner. At other times we labor for God, but during the time of divine service we assist at His

throne, are ready to listen to and address Him, and He addresses us, and at the same time we implore His help in our necessities.

10. Special devotion consists in private prayers; in the customary recitation of vocal prayers, such as psalms, litanies, and others, which each one performs in secret and according to his personal inclinations. “Thus shall you pray,” says Christ, “Our Father,” etc., A second form of special prayer consists in holy meditation, when a person reflects upon his sins, misery, and future punishment, or recalls to mind the general and special favors he has received from God, the Passion of Christ, the sweet balm of His goodness and His promises of future reward, in order to derive from the consideration of these things sentiments of devotion, of fear and love of God, of desire, compunction and spiritual joy. “I meditated in the night with my own heart: and I was exercised and I swept my spirit.” Special devotion manifests itself, thirdly, in pious aspirations, tears and sighs, outbursts of love, and other internal and ineffable affections of the heart, in exaltations, ecstasies, raptures and absorption of the soul in God. Through these “he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit” with Him through the light of pure intelligence, through the knowledge of God, the ardor of His love, and a sweet and intimate union full of joy. “The spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings.”

11. If a superior by the cares and distractions of his office is prevented from devoting himself to special devotions and prayers, he should, at least occasionally when it is possible, and as it were by stealth, engage in the practice of prayer, that he may not become entirely cold, neglect prayer, become a stranger to God, and the grace of God’s mercy may not insensibly, as it were, be withdrawn from him. This was the reason why Moses, when harassed by the care of the people, frequently sought solace in the Tabernacle, entering into familiar intercourse with God and being thereby refreshed in mind and heart. Christ, after preaching to the multitudes during the day, spent the nights alone in prayer. Although a superior may have little time for prayer, still, because it is his duty to pray for others, he may sometimes for their sake be vouchsafed a greater measure of grace, in order that he may benefit also by praying those whom he benefits by his care and attention. But let him not neglect prayer, or refuse to improve the opportunity, when offered, lest he be deprived of the grace of prayer in punishment for his ingratitude.

12. Devotion should be assiduous or continuous in a superior, as in all that desire to advance in virtue. He should, first, constantly think of God. "I set the Lord always in my sight, ... my eyes are ever towards the Lord. Man ought to endeavor to find God everywhere and at every moment, as if He were really present in a visible manner. Elias and Eliseus were wont to say: "As the Lord liveth, in whose sight I stand." For as the Angels do not cease to contemplate God wherever they are sent, so a virtuous man, as far as he is able, should never lose the thought of God from his heart. Should this ever happen, let him do penance. St. Bernard says: "Consider every moment lost in which you do not think of God." Even if you cannot always concentrate your mind on Him in meditation, direct it to Him at least by calling to mind His presence, and when an opportunity occurs, turn recollection into meditation or prayer, as an artist carries the materials for drawing about him in order to sketch a picture when he has an opportunity.

13. Secondly, a superior should continually endeavor to please God by every word and deed, always act as if He were present, avoid whatever is apt to displease Him, be sorry if he has done anything displeasing to God, and eager to please Him more and more. "We labor, whether absent or present, to please him. For we must all be manifest before the judgment seat of Christ." A religious should always act as if he were about to appear before the tribunal of the Supreme Judge. "Be you then also ready; for at what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come." He sees whatever we do, and as He does not forget the good works that merit reward, even though a long time may elapse, so also does He not forget the sins that deserve punishment if they are not purged from the soul by penance. "Every man that passeth beyond his own bed, despising his soul, and saying: Who seeth me?... No man seeth me: whom do I fear? the Most High will not remember my sins.... And he knoweth not that the eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men."

14. The third form of assiduous or constant prayer consists in doing everything devoutly by directing at least the intention towards God, strengthening oneself by prayer for every eventuality, and rendering thanks to and praising God for every blessing. A superior should ask God to inspire him in the performance of his duties, to direct everything towards the attainment of salvation, to increase and preserve His blessings. As a sailor who sees a storm coming, hastens to reach a safe harbor, so the

religious should always fly to the harbor of prayer, in which he may escape every danger, and, in all that he does, should trust more to prayer than to his own labors and exertions. “As we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to thee.” “As the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters, ... so are our eyes unto the Lord our God.”

CONCLUSION

Equipped with these and other wings, therefore, the ecclesiastical Seraph, that is to say, the religious Superior, should serve “the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated.” He raises the first pair of wings above his head, covers body and feet with the second, and flies far and high with the third, that the praise of men may not lessen his zeal nor carnal mindedness govern his conduct.

A good intention shall support him and fraternal charity elevate him to the enjoyment of a heavenly reward. “I have inclined my heart to do thy justifications forever, for the reward.” Patience and an exemplary life will shield him from the arrows of confusion and the nakedness of poverty in supernatural merits. By them he is defended as by arms, and clothed as with holy vestments. “Put on thy strength, O Sion, put on the garments of thy glory.” Discretion will enable him to fly everywhere, seeing what must be done and how, and devotion will make it possible for him to “seek the things that are above; where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God.”

But though all who are placed over souls cannot have all these qualities in an equal measure, it is absolutely necessary for a superior not to be deficient in them altogether, because without them he cannot secure the blessing of edification for those over whom he is placed and of progress on the way to salvation. Every religious who has to govern himself and to account for others at the judgment seat of God, should be adorned and carried upward by these wings, in order that he may be fervent in justice, compassionate towards others for God’s sake, patient in adversity, edify others by a good example, be circumspect in all things, and, above all, be intimately united with God through prayer. The Lord will protect him, guide and advance him in all things, and finally give him the grace of soaring to the heavenly mansions—a grace that, we pray, may be granted to us by Jesus Christ. AMEN.